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THE GENESIS OF CORNEILLE'S MÉLITE

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Pierre Corneille began his career as a writer of comedy and to his comedies was due his early reputation as a dramatic poet.

Rare écrivain de notre France,
Qui le premier des beaux esprits
As fait revivre en tes écrits
L' esprit de Plaute et de Térence;

exclaimed Mairet in 1634, in the complimentary poems of *La Veuve* and Du Petit-Val repeats upon the same occasion:

Ce style familier non encore entrepris,
Ni connu de personne, a de si bonne grâce,
Du théatre françois changé la vieille face,
Que la scène tragique en a perdu le prix.

His early plays acquired the esteem of the court. In the Examen of the *Mélite* he expressly states that his first work "me fit connaître à la cour", and he repeats in the *Excuse à Ariste:* "Mon vers charma la cour." There exists evidence that some of Corneille's early comedies were represented before the court, in 1633, at Forges (Normandy), when the king, the queen and Richelieu resided there for some time. (1)

But the spectacular success of the *Cid* and of the tragedies which followed soon, engrossed the attention of his contemporaries just as they have largely absorbed the attention of his posterity. His first comedies were almost forgotten, and it became the fashion to date his work from his first tragedies, especially from the *Médée* of 1635, and to dismiss his early productions with a few disdainful words.

La Bruyère asserted: "Ses premières comédies sont sèches, languissantes et ne laissaient pas espérer qu' il dut ensuite aller si loin." (2) Boileau agreed with him: Tout son mérite pourtant à l' heure qu' il est, ayant été mis par le temps comme dans un creuset, se réduit à huit ou neuf pièces de théatre, qu' on admire et qui sont, s' il faut ainsi parler, comme le midi de sa poésie dont l' orient et l' occident n' ont rien valu." (3) Their assertions were echoed by Voltaire: "Ses premières comédies ....sont à la vérité, indignes de notre siècle, mais elles furent longtemps ce qu' il y avait de moins mauvais en ce genre, tant nous étions loin de la plus légère connaissance des beaux arts."

Gift
Author
JUN 21 1921

(4) La Harpe showed even less condescension: On me dispensera, sans doute, de parler des premières comédies de Corneille . . . On se souvient seulement qu' il les a faites et que sans rien valoir, elles valent mieux que toutes celles de son temps." (5) According to Nisard they are only to be read "through curiosity." (6).

In this way the general perspective of Corneille's work was altered. He was considered almost exclusively as a writer of tragedies of the heroic cast. And, since he was so superior to his many rivals, he soon came to stand alone. The notion of Corneille's absolute independence of his surroundings and of the literary efforts of his predecessors has been generally accepted. The Abbé d' Olivet exclaims: "Voilà Corneille qui, sans modèle, sans guide, trouvant l'art en lui-même, tire la tragédie du chaos où elle était parmi nous." (7). For Nisard "an abyss separates Corneille from all that can be called a play before him." (8).

With the publication of Taschereau's *Histoire de la Vie de Pierre Corneille* (1829), a reaction set in. His first plays were here, if not thoroughly studied, at least given some place in his work. But the former attitude of mind toward Corneille remained uppermost in the estimation of most critics. Some of them studied his first productions with the intention of discovering in these early works the unmistakable signs of future greatness. As a natural consequence they were sometimes praised beyond their real merit. This has been especially true of his very first play, of the *Mélite.* Some critics already perceived in this *coup d' essai* the methods, inventions and innovations of an independent writer with almost revolutionary tendencies. The tradition that Corneille was inspired by an actual event in his own life to write the *Mélite* was interpreted as meaning that he wrote the play without taking inspiration from any of his predecessors and contemporaries, without going through the apprenticeship in language and stage-craft which is necessary even to the most original genius of the theater. So, for example, Roger Le Brun: "Mais voici que tout à coup, brusquement, sur un ton nouveau, à la fois moins choquante dans l' esprit et dans la langue, presque épurée, la véritable comédie fait son apparition. Sans bassesse dans les caractères, comme sans outrance dans l' intrigue, elle reflète, et d' alerte façon, les moeurs de l' époque. C' est l' aurore de la comédie

moderne; voici, en effet, Pierre Corneille qui débute au théatre, apportant l' art où il n' y a encore que d' informes ébauches de comédie; voici Mélite, première oeuvre qu' ait produite le grand homme. (9) F. Brunetière is not far from sharing in this opinion: "Je crois que dans notre littérature classique elles (les comédies) sont longtemps demeurées sans imitateurs, comme elles étaient à peu près sans modèles. Je crois qu' avec d' autres qualités elles ne sont pas moins originales en leur genre que la comédie de Molière et que les Plaideurs de Racine." (10) According to these writers, who are spokesmen for more, the form, matter and treatment in Corneille's early comedies are almost exclusively the result of the poet's unaided inspiration. There seems to be no link between him and the literature of the time. In comedy as well as in tragedy he is, according to the expression of Sainte-Beuve, "a genius by instinct, blind and independent."

Since this conception of Corneille's early works is founded largely upon the anecdote about the origin of the *Mélite,* I propose here to examine in detail the facts known about the genesis of this play and to study, incidentally, the relation of this "coup d' essai", as Corneille terms it, to the contemporary literature.

To enable the reader to follow the argument further expounded, a résumé of the play, based on the text of the first edition, (1633), is here printed:

Act I. Sc. 1. Éraste confides to Tircis how he suffers from the disdain of Mélite whom he loves and has "served." Tircis talks with cynical irony of love, women and the "burdens" of marriage. Éraste defies him to maintain this attitude after having beheld the beauty of Mélite. Sc. 2. The two friends visit Mélite who treats ironically the love declarations of Éraste. Sc. 3. Tircis confesses to Éraste that he is not insensible to the charms of Mélite but disclaims any intention of paying court to her. Alone, he soliloquizes that in love affairs friendship does not count. Sc. 4. Love scene between Philandre and Cloris, sister of Tircis. Sc. 5. Tircis interrupts and rails at their love making.

Act II. Sc. 1. Éraste complains of the favor which Tircis seems to be receiving from Mélite. Sc. 2. Éraste meets Mélite and reproaches her for her intimacy with Tircis. Sc. 3. Éraste, in despair, resolves to get Tircis out of his way by preparing

forged love-letters from Mélite to Philandre. Sc. 4. Éraste secures by a gift the aid of Cliton, neighbor of Mélite. Sc. 5. Tircis has composed a sonnet for Mélite which he intends to give to Éraste; he shows it to his sister Cloris who recognizes his love for the heroine of the play. Sc. 6. Éraste gives Cliton the forged letter of Mélite to Philandre, suitor of Cloris. Sc. 7. Cliton delivers the letter to Philandre; while he is reading this letter Éraste appears; discloses the love of Tircis for Mélite and encourages Philandre. Sc. 8. Tircis brings his sonnet on Mélite to Éraste, who refuses to accept it while Mélite watches the maneuver from a window. Sc. 9. Mélite confesses to Tircis her love for him.

Act III. Sc. 1. Philandre soliloquizes on his love for Mélite. Sc. 2. Tircis confides his love for Mélite to Philandre who shows him the forged letters of the heroine as a proof of her infidelity. Tircis challenges Philandre who refuses to fight. Sc. 3. Tircis soliloquizes on the infidelity of Mélite and resolves to commit suicide. Sc. 4. Cloris meets him and he shows her the forged letters he has taken from Philandre. Sc. 5. Cloris resolves to show Mélite the letters which she has received from her brother, Tircis. Sc. 6. Philandre resolves to get the letters back from Tircis. Sc. 7. Philandre meets Cloris who shows him the letters which she is about to give to Mélite. Sc. 8. Philandre goes to demand the letters from Tircis.

Act. IV. Sc. 1. The Nurse counsels Mélite on her conduct in love matters. Sc. 2. Cloris visits Mélite and shows her the letters. Mélite denies having written them. Sc. 3. Lisis, a friend of Tircis announces that the latter has died of grief. Mélite swoons. Sc. 4. Cliton, Éraste's letter-carrier, arrives; he concludes that Mélite is dead. Sc. 5. Éraste soliloquizes on the success of his forged letters. Sc. 6. Cliton informs him that both Mélite and Tircis are dead. Éraste goes mad; he believes himself in the infernal regions and takes Cliton for Charon. Sc. 7. Philandre seeks Tircis. Sc. 8. The mad Éraste thinks he is fighting ghosts and demons. He takes Philandre for Minos and explains his deception of the forged letters. Sc. 9. Ravings of Éraste. Sc. 10. Lisis informs Cloris that her brother Tircis is not dead.

Act. V. Sc. 1. Cliton tells the Nurse of the madness of Éraste. Sc. 2. Delirium of Éraste. He takes the nurse for Mélite but finally recognizes her and comes to his senses. Sc. 3.

Philandre tries, but unsuccessfully to become reconciled with Cloris. Sc. 4. Tircis who has come back and Mélite rejoice over their happiness and resolve upon their marriage. Sc. 5. Cloris announces that she has broken with Philandre. Sc. 6. Éraste appears and confesses his fault. He obtains his pardon and the hand of Cloris. The nurse soliloquizes humorously upon her faded charms.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENT IN THE MELITE

The autobiographical element in Corneille's *Mélite* is one of the most discussed questions in Corneille-research. The more general opinion is that his first work is almost entirely inspired by personal experience; that his later comedies are based upon direct observation of his surroundings, whereas his tragedies are a creation of the intellect with little, if any, direct influence from his personal life.

As to the *Mélite,* Thomas Corneille, younger brother of our poet, testified that the germ of the play was furnished by a love-adventure of Pierre Corneille: "Une avanture galante luy fit prendre le dessein de faire une comédie pour y employer un sonnet qu' il avoit fait pour une Demoiselle qu' il aimoit. Cette pièce dans laquelle est traitée toute l' avanture et qu' il intitula Mélite eut un sucès extraordinaire (11).

This passage seems to receive a certain confirmation in verses which Pierre Corneille wrote in 1637, in the *Excuse à Ariste:*

> Ce que j' ai de nom je le dois à l' amour.
> J'adorai donc Philis; et la secrète estime
> Que ce divin esprit faisait de notre rime
> Me fit devenir poète aussitot qu' amoureux. (12).

On the basis, apparently, of these declarations, Fontenelle, nephew of the poet, produced a statement which is more circumstantial and precise, although different in one respect: According to Fontenelle, Pierre Corneille added "something" to the truth, whereas Thomas Corneille states that the "whole adventure" was reproduced in the play. Fontenelle says: Il (Corneille) ne songeoit à rien moins qu' à la poésie et il ignoroit lui-même le talent extraordinaire qu' il avoit, lorsqu' il lui arriva une petite aventure de galanterie dont il s' avisa de faire une pièce de théatre, en ajoutant quelque chose à la vérité. On donnoit à Rouen le nom de Mélite à la dame qui

avoit fait naître l' avanture qui faisoit le sujet de cette pièce.'' (13).

The last sentence of this passage has acted as a powerful stimulant upon the curiosity of later historians. In 1738, the abbé Granet, editor of Corneille's works, in a commentary upon the *Excuse à Ariste,* identifies the lady loved by P. Corneille as a certain Mme Du Pont, married to a ''maître des comptes'' of Rouen. He did not, however, give any proof of his identification. (14).

A field so fertile could not fail to bear some different kind of fruit. At the end of the eighteenth century, Jos. André Guiot brought forward another and a contradictory identification of Corneille's Mélite. In *Le Moréri des Normands* he introduces Mlle Millet as the prototype of the heroine who inspired Corneille in his early years and revealed his talent to the world: ''Sans la demoiselle Millet, très jolie Rouenaise, Corneille peut-être, n' eut pas si tôt connu l' amour; sans cette heroine aussi, peut être, la France n' eut jamais connu le talent de Corneille . . . . Le plaisir de cette aventure détermina Corneille à faire la comédie de Mélite, anagramme du nom de sa maîtresse. (15) Fifty years later (1834) Emmanuel Gaillard improved upon this assertion which, in its turn, had been presented without any citation of proofs: J' ajouterai qu' elle (Mlle Millet) demeurait à Rouen, rue aux Juifs, No. 15. Le fait m' a été attesté par M. Dommey, ancien greffier, et par deux demoiselles (16). Marty-Laveaux sought to reconcile these two identifications; first by supposing that Mlle Millet became Mme Du Pont through marriage; (17) then, renouncing this theory, he concluded that Corneille had been inspired by two sweethearts, Mlle Millet, for whom he had felt an ephemeral passion about the time of the composition of the *Mélite,* and another, Mme Du Pont, to whom he had consecrated the more enduring affection reflected in the *Excuse à Ariste.*

In his valuable work *Points obscurs et nouveaux de la vie de Pierre Corneille,* Mr. Bouquet has expounded a theory of the *Mélite* as an autobiographical document, which is based solely upon the information supplied by the abbé Granet, in 1738. Mr. Bouquet rightly rejects the invention of a shadowy Mlle Millet as the prototype of Corneille's Mélite by Jos. André Guiot, about 1785, because this identification is manifestly a

very late development of a Corneille-legend, with no basis in fact. Its origin is probably the text of Fontenelle where he speaks about a lady of Rouen who was given the name of Mélite because she was the heroine of Corneille's first play.

Although the commentary of the abbé Granet was written more than a century after the first representation of the *Mélite* and although no indication was furnished as to the source of his important biographical details, his text has been accepted without question by Mr. Bouquet and others, and served as basis for research about Corneille's early love and his first play. Mr. Gosselin found in the archives of Rouen the maiden name of Madame Du Pont, who was, according to the abbé Granet, the lady Corneille had in mind when he wrote in the *Excuse à Ariste:*

"Je me sens tout ému quand je l' entends nommer."

She was the daughter of Charles Hue, "receveur des aides" at Rouen, and of Catherine de Bauquemare. Baptized on the 23d of April, 1611, she received the name of her mother: Cathérine. (18) From these facts Mr. Bouquet deduced a series of identifications: Mélite is Catherine Hue; Tircis is Corneille himself; the mother of Mélite, mentioned in the play, although she does not appear on the scene, is Catherine de Bauquemare, widow of Charles Hue; Cloris, in the play the sister of Tircis, is Corneille's younger sister, Marie Corneille, born in 1609. Eraste and Philandre remained unidentified. Mr. Bouquet expresses his opinion that thy represent real persons, as the other characters of the play.

Now, the basis of the identifications of Mr. Bouquet, the commentary of the abbé Granet, does not seem altogether trustworthy. Granet laid special stress on the fact that Corneille's love for Mme Du Pont (Catherine Hue) was a very constant one, lasted for many years, and was only broken off about 1637, the time of the *Excuse à Ariste.* Thomas Corneille and Fontenelle, to the contrary, only speak of "une petite avanture de galanterie" of an ephemeral character. Here follows Granet's commentary in full:

"Il (Corneille) avoit aimé passionément une dame de Rouen, nommée Mme Du Pont, femme d' un maître des comptes de la même ville, parfaitement belle. Il l' avoit connue *toute petite fille pendant qu' il étudiait au Collège des Jésuites,* et fit pour elle plusieurs petites pièces de galanterie, qu' il *n'a jamais*

voulu rendre publiques, quelques instances que lui aient faites ses amis; il les brûla lui même environ deux ans avant sa mort. Il lui communiquoit *la plupart de ses pièces* avant de les mettre au jour, et comme elle avoit beaucoup d' esprit, elle critiquoit fort judicieusement, de sorte que M. Corneille a dit plusieurs fois qu' il lui étoit redevable de plusieurs endroits de ses premières pièces." (Œuvres de Corneille, 1738).

Since Corneille left the College of the Jesuits about 1623, his love for Catherine Hue (later Mme Du Pont), according to Granet's commentary, must have begun before this date; and since he is said to have shown her "most of his early plays", he must have been on good terms with her until at least 1634-35. Corneille's love is thus represented as a very constant one, lasting from ten to twelve years. It is to this constant love Corneille is supposed to allude in the *Excuse à Ariste* (1637), when he tells us that love taught him to rhyme:

"Puisque ce fut par là que j' appris à rimer."

Now, it must be noticed that Corneille had already referred five years earlier to that love "which taught him to rhyme", in one of the poems printed in an appendix to his play *Clitandre* (1632):

J' ai fait autrefois de la bête;
J' avois des Philis à la tête:
. . . . . .
Soleils, flambeaux, attraits, appas,
Pleurs, désespoirs, tourments, trépas,
Tout ce petit meuble de bouche
Dont un amoureux s' escarmouche
Je savais bien m'en escrimer;
Par là je m'appris à rimer;
Par là je fis sans autre chose,
Un sot en vers d' un sot en prose. . . .
(Marty-Laveaux, X, 25).

In both poems the name of the lady is given as Philis. Now, if these two poems refer to the same love-adventure, as is quite clear from their text, this love-adventure had ceased in 1632, and Corneille was not taught to rhyme by a long and constant love, but by an ephemeral love-adventure, the "petite aventure de galanterie" to which Fontenelle refers. The poem

of 1632 (*à Monsieur D. L. T.*) indicates clearly that at that date Corneille was cured from love-fever. It is very apparent, on the other hand, in the *Excuse à Ariste* (1637) that the love referred to had ceased a long time previously for Corneille says there:

"Aussi n' aimais je plus et nul objet vainqueur,
"N' a possédé depuis ma veine ni mon coeur."

Both poems refer then to a love adventure, which taught Corneille to rhyme, and which must have been finished before 1632, so that the explanations of the abbé Granet about the corrections which Mme Du Pont suggested in the early plays of Corneille cannot be accepted as based in fact. Granet seems to have felt that there existed a contradiction between his commentary, which mentioned a long and constant love, and the text of the *Excuse à Ariste,* which referred to a love finished since a long time. He misread Corneille's text, or changed it to make it fit in with his own explanation. Corneille had written:

Elle eut mes premiers vers, elle eut mes *derniers* feux;

In Granet's text this verse reads:

Elle eut mes premiers vers, elle eut mes *premiers* feux; (Marty Lav X, 77, Note 2) which agreed with is own commentary: "Il l' avoit connue *toute petite fille* pendant qu' il étudiait à Rouen au Collège des Jésuites."

Another point in which the commentary of the abbé Granet is not in accordance with fact is that he says that Corneille wrote for his beloved "plusieurs petites pièces de galanterie qu' il n' a jamais voulu rendre publiques, quelques instances que lui aient faites ses amis." This statement cannot refer to the poems Corneille wrote for his sweetheart, Mélite, for, far from refusing to print them, he publishes twice the well-known sonnet: "Après les yeux de Mélite il n' y a rien d' adorable", once in the *Poésies* following the *Clitandre* and once in the play *Mélite.* Besides, the very fact that he produced a whole play about his love adventure shows clearly enough that he was averse to publicity about it.

It must be concluded that the commentary of the abbé Granet does not present a sufficiently reliable clue to the identity of the real lady, who, possibly, is hidden behind the name Mélite in Corneille's first work.

When the identifications made by Gosselin and Bouquet are considered from the point of view of internal evidence some contradictions are at once perceived. Tircis, said to be Corneille himself, is indeed a credulous personage. When the false letters, manufactured by Éraste, fall in his hands, he at once runs away, speaking of suicide instead of ascertaining from his beloved their reality or falseness. And, Cloris,—supposed to be Marie Corneille,—is represented in the play as very free in manners. She has on the scene very intimate love-conversations with her lover, Philandre, and she accepts the falsifier Éraste for husband without showing any notion of moral reserve. Would Corneille have painted his younger sister with such traits? (19).

Corneille's first play concludes with marriages of Tircis with Mélite and of Cloris with Éraste. They took place the same evening, after the action, as is proved by various passages in the first edition which have mostly been erased in the later ones. Verses 1707 and following, for instance, sounded in the early editions:

Tircis:

Tous nos pensers sont dus à ces chastes délices
Dont le ciel se prépare à borner nos supplices:
Le terme en est si proche, il n'attend que la nuit.

and the play concluded:

La Nourrice:

Allez, je vais vous faire à ce soir telle niche,
Qu'au lieu de labourer, vous lairrez tout en friche.

The expressions are not elegant but quite clear; they prove that the marriages were set for the same evening that the action was finished.

Now, Corneille's love-adventure, which he is supposed to have brought on the scene with the *Mélite*, was not ended with a marriage.

Après beaucoup de voeux et de submissions,
Un malheur rompt le cours de nos affections.

he said in the *Excuse à Ariste*, eight years after the time of the *Mélite*. Mr. Bouquet (op. Cit. 58) opiniates that, by the end of the play, the real Mélite had obtained a promise of marriage from her mother and he devotes a page to an hypothesis about the fact why this promise was not kept. Such marriages at the

end of plays were entirely conventional so that no autobiographical value can be attached to them.

All that results from the conflicting testimonials of Fontenelle, Thomas Corneille and the abbé Granet, is that the nucleus of the *Mélite* was furnished by a personal love-adventure of Corneille, and that to that nucleus, he added various episodes. (See note 20). It is possible that Madame Du Pont (Catherine Hue) was the heroine of the *Mélite,* but there is no contemporary evidence to that effect. The statements of the Abbé Granet must be accepted only with reserve. It seems unwarranted to build on the slight foundation of his conflicting commentary a series of identifications as undertaken in the work of Mr. Bouquet. Until more evidence is presented, it seems reasonable to state about the *Mélite* nothing more than exactly what Thomas Corneille and Fontenelle said: That the impulse to write the *Mélite* and the nucleus of the play were both due to a personal adventure of Pierre Corneille.

And even then it is necessary to make a preliminary distinction: Corneille's love for Mélite may have been the occasion of the first blossoming of his talent, it cannot be its origin. Corneille was quite well acquainted with the literature of the times (21), and it is possible to find counterparts of the characters and of the situations of the *Mélite* in the novels and the plays of his period. In some parts the incidents and the characters of Corneille's early plays resemble so closely more or less traditional stage-characters and situations that the question "Where ends the biographical inspiration and where begins the purely literary?" seems well-nigh insoluble. A few resemblances and counterparts of the heroes and the plot of Corneille's first play will be pointed out in the following pages.

THE NAME MELITE

The name Mélite is found in the *Greek Anthology,* in one of the thirty-eight epigrams of the Byzantine poet Rufinus. It occurs too in the late Greek novel *Clitophon's and Leucippus' Loves* by Achilles Tatius, where it designates a wealthy widow. This novel was much in vogue in European countries during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The last four books were translated from Greek into Latin by Annibal della Croce, (22) and then from Latin into French under the title *"Les Devis Amoureux"* (23) by L' Amoureux de la Vertu (Claude

Collet), in 1545. Another translation which ran through three editions was produced some ten years later by Jacques de Roquemare (24): *Les quatre derniers livres de propos amoureux contenans le discours des amours et marriage du seigneur Clitophont et damoiselle Leusippe.* Then follows the complete work in French: *Les Amours de Clitophon et de Leusippe, escrits en grec par Achilles Statius, Alexandrin, et nouvellement traduits en francois par B. (Belleforest) Comingeois.* There are three editions of this translation. The evident popularity of the novel is further attested by the plays derived from it. A lost play of Alexandre Hardy (25), *Leucosie,* was developed from it as a source and one of its characters probably was named Mélite. Pierre du Ryer also found in it the plot of his *Clitophon* which was played about 1628, and in which Mélite is a wealthy widow pursuing the hero Clitophon with her attentions. (25a). The name occurs also in other works composed independently of the Greek novel. So, for example, an anonymous novel of 1609 is entitled *Les Amours de Mélite et de Statiphile* (26). In the pastoral play of Hardy, *Corinne ou le silence,* Corine et Mélite appear as "jeunes bergères, égales en beauté, qui deviennent éperdument amoureuses de Caliste." The name further appears in three other plays which were produced before Corneille's first comedy. Mélite is the friend of Amaranthe in the pastoral play of that name by Gombauld (1625). Professor H. Carrington Lancaster has recently drawn attention to another play in which a Mélite is found, to Rampalle's *Bélinde,* published in 1630 (26a). And, finally, in the *Bague d' Oubli* of Rotrou, Mélite appears in the "dramatis personae" as a "demoiselle confidente de Liliane." (27).

There is no reason to seek in the name Mélite a clue for the identity of the heroine in the "petite avanture de galanterie" by which the poet is said to have been inspired nor to believe it an anagram. It is merely a name taken from the literature of the time, although considerably less banal than that of Philis which Corneille uses in the verses quoted with reference to the same or another love affair.

THE RIVAL FRIENDS

Now as to the "adventure" itself. Only the initial episode of the play can be interpreted as autobiographical: Éraste presents his friend, the women-despising Tircis, to his sweetheart

Mélite. Tircis falls in love with her at sight and soon supplants Eraste in the young lady's affections. The rest of the story: the false letters, the madness of Éraste and the marriages at the end, are obviously commonplaces from the literature of the times. They constitute the incidents which Corneille, according to the testimonial of Fontenelle, "added to truth." The alleged auto-biographical part of the play, the initial episode, will be considered here first.

While it may well be that Corneille met in real life with a "galant" experience closely akin to the main theme of the *Mélite,* it was yet a kind of adventure which had become long since a common-place in literature. Unless we believe that, in Corneille's case, there arose in real life a spontaneous duplication of a traditional situation in the letters of the time, we must assume that his inspiration was literary. But, even granted that the nucleus of the *Mélite* was a personal adventure and not a duplication of a favorite literary situation, Corneille's treatment of the story, his arrangement of the scenes, his conception of his heroes and characters were influenced by the contemporary examples which were numerous enough to constitute stock themes of the authors of the period.

To illustrate this contention, it is sufficient to turn to a parallel of the story of the rival friends in, for example Lyly's novel *Euphues.* Witty Euphues is at first, like Éraste, a satyrical woman-hater. (p. 36-37. Ed. M. Croll and H. Clemond). But, being presented by his friend Philautus to Lucilla, for three years the latter's sweetheart, he too supplants him in the lady's affections. The story develops like Corneille's and purports to show "the falsehood in fellowship, the fraud in friendship, the fair words that make fools fain." Euphues decides, in a soliloquy that over his friendship his love must prevail. In a similar way Tircis determines:

> "En matière d'amour rien n'oblige à tenir,
> Et les meilleurs amis, lorsque son feu les presse,
> Font bientôt vanité d'oublier leur promesse."

While the beginning of both stories is parallel, the end differs: Euphues is supplanted by a third lover; Tircis marries Mélite as is natural in a comedy with a happy ending.

The story of the rival friends in *Euphues* has been asserted to be autobiographical, even as in Corneille's *Mélite.* (28). On

the other hand it has been pointed out convincingly that this struggle between friendship and love is a commonplace of literature which probably originated from a lost Greek romance; and that Lyly was directly indebted to Boccaccio's *Tito and Gisippo* (*Decam.* x, 8) for his narrative (29).

But what about Corneille's *Mélite?* There too are found the same details of plot, the common features of the traditional story of the two rival friends. They can be shortly described as follows: A has been for years in love with a girl, to whom he presents his friend B, generally depicted as a woman-hater or as a wit. During the visit to the betrothed B falls in love with her at first sight. An internal struggle follows between his friendship for A and his love. In most stories A gives up his sweetheart to B and helps him to marry her; but in some cases—as, for instance, in *Euphues,*—a struggle between the two friends follows.

It does not fall within the scope of this study to trace the origin of the numerous narratives and plays based on the conflict between rival friends, nor even to study the various forms it has taken in literature. For the present purpose it is sufficient to point out that the story was treated so frequently about the time of Corneille's début, that it can reasonably be supposed that he was acquainted with it: (30).

The story had become familiar through translations and adaptations of Boccaccios's *Tito é Gisippo,* the eighth Novella of the Tenth day of the *Decamerone.* The forty-sixth novel in *Le Grand parangon des nouvelles Nouvelles,* by Nicolas de Troyes, (31) relates the adventure "D'un compaignon, qui pour l'amour qu'il avoit à ung sien compaignon lui donna et livra sa propre femme pour espouser." Another imitation is contained in *Le Petit Oeuvre d'amour ou gaige d'amitié contenant plusieurs dicts amoureux* (32). Fillipo Beroaldo translated the story into Latin Verse and this in its turn was translated into French (33).

In the literature of the time the *Astrée* contains at least two versions of this story; first the adventures of Thamyre and Calydon both in love with the fair Célidée, and secondly of Palemon who favors his friend Adraste in his love for his wife, Doris (34). In the play *Isabel* of P. Ferry (1610) Calvonte, in love with Clorifée, assists his rival. The same situation occurs in *La Diane Françoise* of Du Verdier (1624) in which Climandre

is ready to resign Amarante to his friend Filamon, and finally, in *La Clorise* of Baro, Eraste gives up his beloved Cloris to Alidor, her other lover (35). Alexandre Hardy, to whom Corneille refers as his first model, adapted Boccaccio's novel to the stage with his *Gésippe ou les deux amis.* "Tite, jeune gentilhomme Romain, étudiant à Athènes contracte une étroite amitié avec Gésippe, Athénien de même âge et de même qualité, qui sur le point d'épouser une des belles d'Athènes en voulut donner la veue à ce sien fidelle amy; l'aspect d'une contagieuse beauté captive Tite d'une telle sorte que réduit au désespoir il projette d'abandonner la ville d'Athènes et sa vie" (36). Hardy's treatment of the story differs, of course, from Corneille's in that Gésippe yields his sweetheart to his friend and even assists in forming their attachment, whereas in Corneille's comedy Éraste strives to retain Mélite. But the dénouement is identical. Just as Éraste finally marries Cloris, sister of his friend Tircis, so in Hardy's play, Gésippe marries Fulvie, sister of his friend and successful rival, Tite. These similarities are the more significant because Corneille must have been acquainted with Hardy's work, for it was published at Rouen by a friend of his, David du Petit-Val, and in the year 1626, that is, only a short time before he must have begun to think of producing his first comedy.

Another play by Hardy, the tragi-comedy, *Dorise,* is of even greater interest in this connection. The first scene of this play also presents two friends in love with the same girl and with the same result; the first lover is supplanted by the second who marries the heroine. Furthermore there is a striking resemblance in important details of the plot. A display of letters plays an important part in the *Dorise* as well as in the *Mélite* and the supplanted lover, Salmacis, runs away to a hermitage and becomes mad under the influence of a mysterious charm much after the manner of Eraste, in Corneille's comedy. In both plays the supplanted lovers finally recover their senses and both plays end in a double marriage (37).

Without lengthening unduly the list of the imitations of the Rival-Friend story, it is clear that love and friendship brought into rivalry was not uncommon in the literature previous to Corneille's début. The initial episode of the *Mélite:*— a lover presents a friend to his sweetheart, and, after a struggle, is supplanted by him—is found, situation for situation, in several counterparts. Corneille's first play seems a variation upon

a stock theme of contemporary romance rather than pure autobiography. And, therefore, identification of the characters of the *Mélite* with living persons is more than hazardous. All that can be gathered from the testimonials of Thomas Corneille and of Fontenelle is that, in the *Mélite,* fact was mingled to some degree with fiction and truth with make-believe. Yet modern criticism has tended to make the *Mélite* entirely true, and a realistic autobiography. If Corneille really utilized a personal experience, he followed traditional models in the treatment of his material, in the development and succession of his scenes, in the characterization of his heroes.

IS TIRCIS, CORNEILLE?

Tircis, who, in the *Mélite,* supplants his friend Éraste in his sweetheart's affections, has been identified generally with Corneille himself (40). He is depicted as a sceptic in love-matters who becomes a convert to love through the bewitching beauty of Mélite.

Such an identification becomes, however, very doubtful when it is remembered that in the early editions, Tircis was guilty of several indecent expressions and allusions. (41). Why would Corneille have depicted himself in such unfavorable light? Would he really have represented himself as a light-hearted sceptic, frequently indecent in his expressions, who betrayed his friend in love? Would he have made the reputation of his beloved Mélite who rejected her first suitor, an object of public commentary? Yet, whether Corneille intended to embody his own "self" in Tircis or not, the first audiences of the *Mélite* must have recognized in Tircis a personage with whom they were already very familiar. There had grown up in the sixteenth century even, in reaction against the hero embodying the Platonic love conception which had spread from Italy, a type which served sometimes as a contrast and sometimes as a foil to these conceptions. It was a type which railed at the flowery language and the absurd actions of the exponents of "l' amour éternel;" it was a literary impersonation of "l'esprit gaulois" which voiced a revolt against the unreal ideals of the pastoral novels and plays, insisted upon the realities of life and love; who claimed the right of lovers to "change" and even erected inconstancy into a rule of conduct. As such it appears in the person of the cynic Saffredent, opponent to the Platonist

Dagoncin in the *Heptaméron* of Marguerite of Navarre. It is easy to trace the character through the literature which followed. Estienne Pasquier introduced him in his *Monophile* (1554), the possessor "d'un coeur gay et François, estant adonné à toutes, sans faire estat d' une seule" who believed "que meilleur est faindre l'amour que d'aimer." In *La Pyrénée* of Belleforest (1572) his name is Drion, who brings love back to its natural and materialistic origin and has no patience with the Platonic dreamers: "Quant à moi, j'aime mieux rire à mon aise sentant et savourant un peu de plaisir, qu'extatic et rêveur songer un bonheur qui ne se gagne que par imagination." In the *Bergeries de Juliette* by Ollenix de Mont-Sacré (Nicolas de Montreux) he appears as the cool headed Glaphire and as the woman-hater Belair in *Les Infidèles Fidèles, fable boscagerre* (1603) of the "shepherd Calianthe" (probably G. de Bazire). Many other novels and plays contain this type of the witty sceptic, merry and light-hearted womanhater, lavish with his shrewd materialistic counsels. He appears as Floridan in *L'Heureux Désespéré, tragi-comédie pastorale* (1613) by C. A. Seigneur de C. (Comte Adrien de Cramail?), whose motto is: "A tous vents," and who rails at the constancy of Angeralde. Philiris in the *Isabelle* (1610) of Paul Ferry represents the type when he exclaims: "Moy qui n'aime sinon ce qui m'est profitable."

The most interesting and most highly developed representative of the type is probably Hylas in the *Astrée* (42) the smiling dilettante of love, the theorician of inconstancy as a rule of conduct. Throughout the novel his capricious and witty attacks upon the apotheosis of woman and the hollow unreality of shepherd love serve as an antidote to the abstract and sublimated theories of Céladon. And in his conduct he puts his theories into practice. For example, in the third book (second volume) where Clorion is in love with Cyrène, he makes Hylas his confident. Hylas encourages him and promises to serve as his ambassador and advocate with the lady but, like Tircis in the *Mélite*, he betrays the faith of his friend. He falls in love with Cyrène and adds her to the already formidable number of his amorous conquests. The mental debate on friendship versus love in which Hylas indulges (L. 217) is quite in line with the debate portrayed in the monologue of Tircis at the end of the third scene of the first act of the *Mélite* and the conclu-

sion is the same, namely, that in love matters, sentiment of the friend must give way before the passions of the lover. This idea is found more precisely stated in the comedy which Maréchal composed on the basis of the Hylas episodes in the *Astrée: L'Inconstance d' Hylas* (43).

L'amour de Périandre augmente mon ennuie,
Ma flamme de ses feux, tient la force et la vie,
Montrons-luy qu'en amour tout effort est permis.
Qu' Hylas pour estre amant, ne connoit point d'amy.

And Tircis in the *Mélite* (I. 3) gives utterance to precisely the same sentiments:

En matière d'amour rien n'oblige à tenir,
Et les meilleurs amis, lorsque son feu les presse
Font bientôt vanité d'oublier leurs promesses (44).

In 1627 Hon. d'Urfé brought Hylas on the stage in his *Sylvanire.* As in the *Mélite,*—the play opens with a discussion between two friends about love. Aglante, deeply in love with Sylvanire, is here confronted with the smiling and cynical Hylas in the same way as Eraste and Tircis in the first scene of Corneille's play. The whole dispute, which can be traced to Italian models runs along the same general lines (45).

And here is found the connecting link between the type of the love-sceptic (Monophile, Dagoncin, Euphues, Hylas, Tircis, etc.) and the story of the two Rival Friends. Before Corneille already, as exemplified above, the light-hearted sceptic in love had been identified with the faithless friend. Corneille's Tircis is a counterpart of these well-known fiction characters rather than his own portrait. In 1660, Corneille himself perceived that his Tircis was not altogether "vraysemblable." He said in his *Examen de Mélite:* Tircis, qui est l' honnête homme de la pièce, n' a pas l' esprit moins leger que les deux autres." (Philis and Éraste).

There is every reason to conclude that Corneille, composing his first play, should have shown toward the conventional types and scenes of the literature of his time much of that docility which he was to display in after years, in matters of far greater moment, when his mastery of the art had won recognition. Even granted that he attempted self-portrayal with his Tircis, he only succeeded in reproducing a well-known character of contemporary fiction, placed in a traditional situation, struggling with the much exploited "love versus friendship" problem.

THE LETTER-DEVICE AND THE MADNESS OF ERASTE

The plot of the *Mélite* contains two other fundamental elements: the use of forged letters and the madness of Éraste. Reference to the outline of the play, given above, shows that Eraste in order to balk his rival, forges letters from Mélite to Philandre. These letters, falling into the hands of Tircis are the pivot upon which the plot turns. No attempt has ever been made to connect both these episodes with Corneille's life; consideration of them may therefore be limited to a search in contemporary literature for the models upon which they were constructed.

The letter-device was very popular with the authors of the period. It is sufficient to open any novel to find love letters used for all purposes. The *Astrée,* notably, is full of them and many go to the wrong address. The novel begins with a letter stratagem very similar to the one used by Corneille. Alcippe, father of Céladon, has a young shepherd, Squilindre, prepare "une lettre contrefaite" in order to produce an estrangement between Astrée and his son. In the fifth volume (book 11) Squilindre prepares another forged letter, from Sigismond to Dorinde, at the behest of king Gondebaut. In like manner Éraste, in the *Francion* of Sorel forges a letter with the same fraudulent intentions and the father of Florigène in *Les Religieuses Amours de Florigène et de Méléagre,* makes use of the same trick in order to create a misunderstanding between his daughter and Méléagre, her lover (46). In many cases the letters are genuine and come into the possession of the heroine or of her lovers causing jealousy or despair. So, for example, in the fourth book of the first volume of the *Astrée,* Sémire learns of the love of Céladon and Astrée through a lost letter.

From the novels the use of letters in the interests of the plot passed into the plays. In the *Dorise* of Hardy, which, as has been shown above, contains many important elements of the *Mélite* plot, Licanor makes use of a letter to arouse the jealousy of Dorise and thus gain an advantage over his more fortunate rival Salmacis. In the *Amaranthe* of Gombauld, (played 1623, published 1628) Orante prepares a false letter purporting to come from the goddess Diane, by which he hopes to have his rival condemned to death. That the use of letters to create jealousy was a popular device with playwrights is proved by the fact that it occurs in many plays composed before or

after the *Mélite: Les Vendanges de Suresne* (du Ryer), *Célie and L'Heureuse Constance* (Rotrou), *La Mort des Enfants d'Hérode* (La Calprenède) etc.

The forged letters upon which the plot of Corneille's first comedy hinges is then one from that extensive repertory of devices, letters, rendez-vous, oracles, magic mirrors, boasted favors, etc., out of which contemporary writers spun the tangled webs of their novels and plays. They are devoted to the same purpose, triumph over a rival, and they are all used in about the same way and generally with the same outcome: Seeing the result of these tricks, the perpetrator, overcome by remorse, becomes temporarily insane, while the victim, as a matter of course gives way to his despair and contemplates suicide.

The adventures of the lovers in the *Mélite* follow this course. Having read the letters forged by Éraste, which prove the love of Mélite for Philandre, Tircis runs away, his mind intend upon suicide. At least such was the action in the earlier versions in which one reads these lines, removed in later editions:

> Et mes pieds me porteront sous eux en quelque lieu désert,
> En quelque lieu sauvage à peine découvert
> Où ma main d'un poignard achèvera le reste,
> Et pour suivre l'arrêt de mon destin funeste,
> Je répandrai mon sang.

Mélite hearing a false report of Tircis' death falls in a swoon and, for the moment, is believed to be dying. The carrier of the forged letters hastens to Éraste and reproaches him with the death of the lovers. Éraste, filled with remorse for his crime, becomes insane. Both the episode and the treatment of it in the *Mélite* are quite in harmony with the literary conventions of the time.

In his *Examen de Mélite* of 1660, Corneille confessed that the madness scenes of his first play were not original: "La folie d'Éraste n'est pas de meilleure trempe. Je la condamnois dès lors en mon âme; mais comme c' étoit un ornement de théâtre qui ne manquoit jamais de plaire et se faisoit souvent admirer, j'affectai volontiers ces grands égarements." (47).

During the quarrel of the *Cid,* one of Corneille's bitterest opponents, Claveret, wrote: "Ceux qui considéront bien vostre fin de Mélite, c'est à dire la frénésie d'Éraste, que tout le monde avoue franchement estre de vostre invention, et qui verront le peu de rapport que ces badineries ont avec ce que vous avez

dérobé, jugeront sans doute que le commencement de la Mélite . . . . . n' est pas une pièce de vostre invention (48). Claveret means, of course, that the "frénésie d' Éraste" was only one more proof of Corneille's lack of originality in the *Mélite*. And, in fact, the madness device was one of the commonplaces of the literature of the times, (49) which was especially prevalent in plays at the time that Corneille wrote his "coup d' essai." Éraste, overcome by remorse, believes that the earth has bursted and that he stands before the Styx. He takes his helper Cliton, for Charon, who, he believes, refuses him passage over the river of the dead. Now, Charon's refusal to take aboard the souls of those lovers who were killed by love, was a stock theme of the sixteenth and of the early seventeenth century. The popularity of the situation goes back to the well-known sonnet of Olivier de Magny, which, according to the testimonial of G. Colletet, in his *Traité du Sonnet*, was copied and learned by heart by every lover of poetry:

Magny.
Hola, Charon, Charon, nautonnier infernal!
Charon.
Qui est cet importun qui si pressé m' appelle?
Magny.
C' est l' esprit éploré d' un amoureux fidèle,
Lequel pour bien aimer n' eust jammais que du mal.
Charon.
Que cherches tu de moy?
Magny.
Le passage fatal.
Charon.
Quel est ton homicide?
Magny.
O demande cruelle!
Amour m' a fait mourir.
Charon.
Jamais dans ma nasselle
Nul subjet à l' amour je ne conduis à val.
Magny.
Et de grace, Charon, recoy-moy dans ta barque.
Charon.
Cherche un autre nocher, car ny moy, ny la Parque
N' entreprenons jamais sur ce maistre des Dieux.

Magny.

J' iray done maugré toy ; car j' ay dedans mon ame
Tant de traicts amoureux, tant de larmes aux yeux,
Que je seray le fleuve, et la barque et la rame.

In the *Mélite* the supposedly dead lover to whom a passage over the Styx is refused, pretends to fight ghosts and gods, and to inspire terror and confusion in the infernal regions. This situation is found worked out more at length than in the *Mélite* in Ph. Desportes' *La mort de Rodomont, et sa descente aux enfers, partie imitée de l' Arioste, partie de l' invention de l' auteur,* (50) and in various plays of the time as, for instance, in Hardy's *Alcméon ou la vengeance féminine* and in A. Mareschal's *La généreuse Allemande* (1630). The recovery of Corneille's hero from his spell of madness also follows closely the convention of the stage of the period as exemplified by de Viaud's *Pirame et Thisbé,* Mairet's *Sylvie,* Rotrou's *Hypocondriaque* and other plays (51).

THE OTHER CHARACTERS OF THE MELITE

The nurse who plays an important part in the recovery of Éraste also belongs in the list of conventions which had long been presented upon the French stage. It was a traditional character played generally by a masked man. In the comedy of the sixteenth century, to be sure, the nurse-character is rather rare for the reason that the old woman of the play was generally a "femme d'intrigue" of the Celestina type. She plays however, a small role in the *Fidèle* of Larrivey and a ridiculous one as Marian in *L'Escolier.* But in the tragedy composed in imitation of the ancients, she took a more important part in the action, as in the *Médée* of La Péruse, the *Lucrèce* of Nicolas Filleul (1566), *La Carthaginoise* of Montchrestien, etc. She even pays for her interference in the action with her life as in the *Tyr et Sidon* of de Schélandre (1608 and 1628).

She appears in the tragi-comedy as a distributor of good counsels, favoring or combatting the love of the hero or heroine. In Théophile de Viaud's *Pyrame et Thisbé,* the nurse, Bersiane oversees the conduct of Thisbé whom she counsels and reproaches in quite maternal fashion. She appears in the tragi-comedy *Clotilde* of Jean Prévost (1613), in Jean Auvray's *Marsilie* (1609, republished as *L'Innocence Découverte,* 1628) where she plays an important role and shares the sentence of

banishment which has been pronounced against her mistress. In a number of other plays—especially in those of Hardy and in the *Heureux Naufrage* of Rotrou—she is the counsellor and confidante and, in some cases the "entremetteuse." Nowhere does she become a comic character, nor is she such in the *Mélite* except at the very end. Everywhere else in the play she appears as a woman, full of worldly wisdom, counselling Mélite with the solicitude of a mother and in fact taking the place of the heroine's mother who is mentioned two or three times but does not appear upon the stage. She is really Mélite's confidante and when Corneille in the *Galérie du Palais* metamorphoses the nurse into the *Suivante,* it is more her name that has changed than her conduct.

Fournel (52) attributes to Corneille a transformation of the nurse's role: C'est encore P. Corneille qui, dans ses premières comédies, a donné à la nourrice le rôle le plus caractérisé. Familière avec Mélite, qu'elle tutoie, sa confidente et son intermédiaire, très prudente, etc. The typical nurse-character as presented by Corneille was however fully sketched by Hardy in his *Felismène, Dorise, Frégonde, Gésippe, Alcméon, Panthée,* etc. In the *Dorise,* the *Frégonde,* and the *Gésippe* especially is she presented as the sort of maternal confidant who advises and comforts the heroines quite in the fashion of the Nourrice in the *Mélite.* In the *Gésippe* (Act I., sc. 2) she admonishes the heroine:

> Mais madame, il ne faut qu'une fille en cela
> Montre si clairement la passion qu'elle a, etc.

and in the *Mélite* she sounds a similar warning:

> Une fille qui voit et que voit la jeunesse
> Ne s'y doit gouverner qu'avec beaucoup d'adresse.

The conventional character of the nurse in Corneille's first comedy is made more apparent by the two young women of the play who, compared with her, are relatively realistic creations. Mélite is represented as a true, honest, and reserved though somewhat tenderhearted maiden who has little need of the worldly-wise counsels which the nurse gives her. Her sentimentality is lightened by a shade of irony; she is always ready with a witty answer and she is not at all disposed to be carried away by the flowery compliments of Eraste. Cloris is less reserved and less sentimentally inclined. She is distinguished by practi-

cal sense, and, although capricious, she remains very positive in her views on lovers and their passions.

When Éraste has sent the forged letters which he claims to have been written by Mélite to Philandre, all the characters of the play vie with one another in credulity. Philandre does not question for a moment the authenticity of these letters brought to him by a messenger whom he does not know, from a young lady whom he has never met. Tircis, having seen the letters, seeks no explanation but immediately begins to contemplate suicide. Mélite waits for no verification of the report of the death of Tircis but promptly faints, while Éraste immediately becomes insane at the news of the double tragedy. Cloris alone remains calm and intelligent enough to do the sensible and obvious thing; she shows the letters to Mélite who denies having written them. In this way she brings the imbroglio to an end and her "common sense" lends probability to her marriage at the end of the play with Éraste after he had been sufficiently punished for his duplicity. Éraste was rich as indicated by different allusions in the play, while she, like her brother, Tircis, was little blessed with worldly goods.

Different as they are, the two young girls, the tender but inconstant Mélite, the practical but capricious Cloris, are both "young girls." Without attempting any profound psychological analysis, Corneille succeeded in endowing his two heroines with such characteristics and such features of the young girl type that they are enough to clearly differentiate his comedy from that of the sixteenth century. The role is rare in the comedy of the sixteenth century. In most cases there is no place for her in the immoral plots, and when she does appear, she bears few of the characteristics of the modern "young girl" but rather resembles the young women of the Italian stage who show no reserve in love but are apparently ready to receive their lover or lovers immediately upon terms of the greatest intimacy. They have neither delicacy nor even decency. To this type of young women belong, for example, the Genevieve of *Les Contens* (Odet de Turnèbe) Grassette of *Les Escoliers* (Perrin), Antoinette of *La Reconnue* (Belleau), etc.

Corneille then, in the *Mélite,* drew two young women of a more elevated and refined type notwithstanding a few rather dubious scenes which were removed in later editions of the play. However, even here, it is easy to exaggerate his originality for,

between the comedies of the sixteenth century and this, his first play, came the pastoral plays and the pastoral and sentimental novels, which, with all their unreal and verbose sentimentality of shepherd love, had established a finer conception of the young girl type (53) Mélite resembles many a sentimental and confiding shepherdness of pastoral novel and plays of the 1600-1630 period. The capricious and practical Cloris too has her prototype in quite a number of shepherdesses who are changeable, capricious and full of daring such as, for example, the Stelle of the *Astrée.* From the pastoral literature the finer type of young girl passed into the novels and stories, taken or pretending to be taken from contemporary life. One finds in them young girls with the same characteristics, the same attitude toward the flowery compliments of their lovers as in the *Mélite* and in the other early plays of Corneille. So, for instance, in *Les Amours d' Eurymedon et de Lydie,* the eighth story of de Rosset's *Histoires des amans volages de ce temps* (54). Eurymedon finds, during a ball, occasion to present his homages to Lydie: "Ce fut là qu' il luy dist qu' animé des louanges que tout le monde rendoit à son merite, mais plus encores des éclats de Divinité, que luy mesme voyoit luyre en son beau visage, il venoit pour luy sacrifier ses volontez. Il la conjuroit de jetter les yeux plutost sur l' excez de son amour, que sur son mérite, et de ne dedaigner point de le tenir desormais au rang de ceux qui luy offroient tous les jours leurs libertez. Lydie qui avoit dejà quelque inclination à vouloir du bien à ce Cavalier, quoy qu' elle le dissimulast, fit au commencement paroitre quelque petit traict de rigueur, ainsi que ces belles font ordinairement, et luy dict que si le bruict luy donnoit quelque louange, on devoit attribuer ceste gloire plustost à l' opinion qu' à la vérité. Et pour le regard de la divinité dont il luy parloit, elle n' estoit pas si vaine, qu' elle ne recogneust bien que ces discours estoient proférez par forme de raillerie, et non par dessein de la louer. C' est pourquoy voyant que les louanges qu' il luy donnoit estoient feintes, elle jugeoit aussi que ses volontez qu' il luy présentoit ne pouvoient estre que feintises. Eurymedon repart, et dit qu' elle offensoit par trop sa beauté, qui, véritablement belle, ne pouvoit produire que des desseins pour la servir. Ils eussent continué ce discours: mais parce que Lydie craignoit que quelque une de ses compagnes ne tendist l' oreille, avec un doux

sousris pria Eurymedon de remettre ceste dispute en un autre lieu.'' (p. 424-25).

Again the same situation as in the *Mélite* and other early plays of Corneille: a lover paying conceited compliments to a sweetheart rather scornful of his hyperbolic language, is found in other stories of de Rosset, as in *Les Amours d' Amador et de la belle Hypolite.* (*Amans volages de ce temps,* p. 464-65): Tant de rares dons et tant de qualitez qui luysoient sur le beau visage d' Hypolite, estoient autant de filets qui lioient estroictement la liberté de ce Cavalier, et qui luy ostoient la parolle. Enfin sa langue venant à se delier, son coeur profera ce discours plein esgallement d' Amour et de respect. Si je pouvois (belle Hypolite) dire aussi belles parolles, que vostre beauté me donne de belles pensées, je m' efforcerois de vous representer et vostre mérite et ma passion. Mais où trouveroit on un esprit aussi disert, que vostre corps est beau, afin de vous rendre des louanges semblables à vos perfections? Il faut advouer que cela estant impossible, je les dois seulement admirer, de peur de les profaner en les louant: Heureux si en estant adorateur, vostre divinité regardoit d' un oeil favorable les voeux, et permettoit les sacrifices, que le devoir et la cognoissance m' obligent desormais de luy rendre.....La Belle qui avoit desja consideré la beauté et la grace de ce Cavalier, et qui se sentoit aucunement ambrasée d' un feu auquel nostre consentement sert d' amorce, fit semblant de premier abord de n' entendre point ses paroles. Néantmoins avec un doux sousris elle luy fit ceste responce: Si les hommes estoient aussi veritables que dissimulez, vous me feriez (Monsieur) desja entrer en quelque vaine gloire. Mon peu de mérite, et la croyance que j'ay, que c' est pour donner carrière à vostre bel esprit, feront que je tiendray ce langage ainsi indifferent....''

Ironical verses against flowery love-declarations in the same style as found in the *Mélite* occur in the volume of miscellaneous verse, *Le Banquet des Muses* of the Rouen lawyer Jean Auvray (1623): Here too a complimentary courtier suffers a more or less sincere rebuff from his lady:

Le courtisan:

Mais l' ame qui est bien assise
N' astreint qu' en bon lieu sa franchise;
Elle n' a poinct de passion

Si non pour la perfection;
Et si la cire de ses aisles
Se fond aux vives estincelles
D' une rare et grande beauté,
Bénissant sa témérité
Elle fait sa gloire et son lucre
D' un si honorable sépulchre,
Bien heureuse de s' abismer
En si grande et fameuse mer.

Ne vous estonnez donc, madame,
Si la vive et charmeuse flamme
Qui sort de vos yeux, mes soleils,
M' embrazent de feux nonpareils,
Je cerche au mal qui me possède
En vous mon unique remède,
Et si au fort de mes douleurs
J' implore vos rares faveurs."

La dame:

Monsieur, ces facondes merveilles
Dont vous repaissez mes oreilles
Ne me touchent point jusqu'au coeur,
Je croy que d' un style moqueur,
Passant de l' honneur la barrière,
Vostre esprit se donne carrière,
Et que toutes ces passions,
Ces beautez, ces perfections,
Ces feux, cet amour, ce martire,
Sont fragments de vostre bien dire
Et l' ornement de vos discours." (p. 241).

We see then that the common sense of the young girls in Corneille's *Mélite* was not without examples in the literature of the period, and that their anti-preciosity bears resemblance to the attitude of other contemporary heroines of fiction and poetry.

It is reasonably certain that Corneille, in composing his first play, looked about him for material. The initial story of a lover supplanted by his friend in the affections of a young woman; the letters forged by the disappointed lover, the madness of Eraste, his subsequent recovery all that appears repeat-

edly in the literature of the early seventeenth century. The characters are equally French. A long line of ancestors preceded the love-sceptic Tircis; and Eraste does not differ from the ordinary shepherd-rival. The young girls are clearly reflections of the novels of contemporary life of the times; and the nurse was a convention of even longer standing. The plot and development of the *Mélite* are neither absolutely original nor can they be interpreted, with any degree of certainty as entirely auto-biographical. At the same time the play does not seem to be a servile imitation dependent on a single source. It seems a rather skilful gathering of more or less traditional scenes and situations and types; an assembling of reminiscences from Corneille's reading rather than any direct transcript from the life which he observed and in which he took part. (55). Yet, he stated in his *Examen de Mélite,* in 1660: La nouveauté de ce genre de comédie dont il n' y a aucun exemple dans aucune langue..... furent sans doute la cause de ce bonheur surprenant et qui faisoit alors tant de bruit." (56). The difference of the *Mélite* from the contemporary plays, on which Corneille prided himself in 1660, lies rather in the fact that he brought, or rather attempted to bring, on the stage characters from the France he knew, than in the invention of a new plot. Yet, in this respect he had been preceded by the great number of novels which treated of contemporary themes, and, frequently, in the same setting as in Corneille's early productions: in Paris.

CORNEILLE'S EARLY PLAYS AND THE NOVELS OF THE TIME

Corneille's *Mélite* differs from the stage of his day in that the scene of this pastoral love-imbroglio is laid in Paris. "La scène est à Paris." But the love-story of the two rivals—Eraste and Tircis,—is not in any way related to this setting; it remained a pastoral intrigue, pervaded by the traditional pastoral gallantry. Corneille's characters behave in Paris just as do the happy or love-lorn shepherds in the shady groves of d'Urfé's Forez. They walk along the beaten path of the pastoral in the rivalries which are characteristic of this type of fiction; they adopt the customary tricks of disappointed lovers; they fall into the customary madness or despair, and end their arduous courtship with the no less conventional pairing off at the dénouement.

The young Corneille was in perfect good faith, no doubt,

when he called his characters "Parisians." At the time of the *Mélite* he was a young lawyer of the Provinces, who had no intimate acquaintance with the cultivated Parisian circles which he tried to depict. He did not find his types in the real life of the capital, for it was only later that he visited Paris for any considerable time. The anecdote related by Thomas Corneille and Fontenelle, stating that the nucleus of the *Mélite* was furnished to the young Corneille by a personal adventure *at Rouen*, implicates that he did not depict lovers from the refined Parisian drawing rooms, but from the more provincial surroundings of his native city. It is to be observed, as I have pointed out in the preceding chapter, that rather than portraying types from Paris or from his own environment, he was largely reproducing characters and situations from the contemporary fiction or from the contemporary stage.

Critics have generally attributed to Corneille, at the time of his early plays, a good deal of independent power of realistic observation. He is said to have portrayed in them the "précieux" society of his day. Yet, one finds in his early productions, especially in the *Mélite* and the *Clitandre*, a number of incidents and situations, which could not be taken directly from daily life. Tircis' credulity and Eraste's mythological madness, in his first play, cannot be classified as common traits of the "honnête homme." His heroes are closely akin to the shepherds of the then flourishing pastoral, to the "gentleman" of the contemporary, sentimental and pastoral novels. Now, since Corneille was well acquainted with the literature of the epoch (57), it is clear enough that he viewed his "contemporary" characters largely through literary prototypes, that he modeled them after the pattern of the "honnête homme", as he knew him through his readings.

Corneille's tendency toward the painting of contemporary life—which grows stronger and more balanced in the three plays following the *Clitandre*—had been exemplified before and after 1630, by the parallel effort toward contemporaneity which can be traced in a great number of novels of the time, in those that undertook to depict "real life," (58) as seen, more or less, through the pastoral atmosphere. These novels present, in this respect, a marked contrast to the development in theatrical composition, which, from 1610 to about 1630, gave little or no place to the French life of the time. The great variety of dramatic forms

prevalent at the beginning of the seventeenth century, all remained alien to the portrayal of the actual life of the epoch. The tragi-comedy showed a preference for historical or foreign subjects; the farce remained decidedly in the lower regions of life; the pastoral clung to its conventional setting of a shepherds' country; the tragedy reproduced the subject-matter taken from antiquity.

There is no doubt that these novels,—which devoted much attention to contemporary life,—influenced the stage in this direction. It was quite a common practice during the early part of the seventeenth century to adapt the plot of a novel to the stage, and it has been said that the tragi-comedy, with all its irregularities, was essentially an attempt to condense in a few acts, all the adventures of a long heroic novel. Examples of such adaptations are numerous. Hardy, for example, took his *Dorise* from de Rosset's *Amans volages de ce temps;* his *Gésippe* from Boccaccio, etc.; Rotrou cut a play out of Sorel's *Cléagenor et Doristée;* du Ryer took his *Lisandre et Caliste* from a novel of d'Audiguier, and put Barclay's *Argenis* on the stage. The late-Greek novel of Tatios inspired his *Clitophon,* and Hardy used the same source for one of his lost plays. Du Hamel imitated in his tragedy *Acoubar* (1603), the novel of du Périer, *Les Amours de Pistion.* The *Amours de Dalchmion et de Deflore,* a novel of J. Philippes, is put on the stage as the *Amours de Dalcméon* by Est. Bellone. Giboin took his tragi-comedy, *Amours de Philandre et de Marizée,* (1619) from de Nervèze's story of the same title (1598). The *Astrée* was for years the source of plot material for de Scudéry, Rayssiguier, and various others (59). The playwrights of the time delved with eager hands into the treasures of fiction that the novels opened for them.

The theories and examples of the novelists were thus bound to affect the composition of these plays as well as the literary atmosphere in general. Now, during the 1600-1630 period, the novelists voiced many times the need of turning to contemporary life for literary subjects and tried to put their theories into practice in creating "real" men and women. Their stories from "real" life, however, continued to be filled with elements taken from the romances of chivalry, from the Greek or the pastoral novel. A magician, a wonderful shipwreck, a glorious fight of the hero against overpowering odds, or even a satyr, appear in a tale, pretending to be "entirely true." This curious mixture of

"vraysemblable" and "invraysemblable" is characteristic of the chaotic state of the literature of the time. Even in novels, which made a claim to truthfulness, the elements of real life and those of the pastoral or chivalric romance are strangely blended, Guillaume Coste for instance, in his *Les Bergeries de Vesper* (60) drew a picture—remarkable for the time—of the love adventures of some shepherds, who were, in reality, lovers from the class of the country nobility, with their characteristic customs. These lovers are adorned with shepherds' names, says the writer, "pource qu'il faut qu'ils conduizent et gouvernent leurs pensées amoureuses, qui sont des troupeaux assez souvent malaisez à gouverner." The elements of reality are represented by clearly portrayed meetings and walks in the country, convivial feasts, and serenades; the elements from the pastoral tradition by fights with a satyr, wandering cavaliers, etc.

When a novel of that type was put on the stage, it retained these characteristics and presented the same mixture of the real and the unreal. Hardy's play, *Dorise,* taken from de Rosset's *Amans volages de ce temps,* furnishes an example. The Persian names of some of his heroes have no more significance than the shepherd's names of the *Bergeries de Vesper,* for de Rosset claims to picture contemporary noblemen. He says that in his book "sous des noms empruntez sont contenus les Amours de plusieurs Princes, Seigneurs, Gentils-hommes, & autres personnes de marque, qui ont trompez leurs Maistresses, ou qui ont esté trompez d'elles." The incidents of the story, and consequently of Hardy's play, are strikingly resemblant to those of Corneille's *Mélite.* Two friends, Salmaces and Licanor, love Doris. During the absence of Salmaces, the rival, Licanor, wins the girl for himself by lying and by a letter-trick. Salmaces runs off to the country and lives half-mad in a hermitage, where he is discovered by Sydère, who loves him. The "invraysemblable" elements are then introduced in this alleged "vraysemblable" love-story in the form of a female magician, who discovers that the madness of Salmaces is occasioned by a secret charm. With her supernatural power, she brings him back to sanity and a double marriage ends the play. This work is relatively more real than much of the contemporary and later production. And for this, the influence of its source,—a novel of contemporary life,—is largely responsible.

In the period 1600-1630, when the general tendencies of the theater were either toward the pastoral or toward the extravagant

tragi-comedy, these novels imitated thus, in a more or less conventional manner, the life of the time. But they limited themselves to the love between noblemen and refined ladies, for they disdained "ces amours vulgaires qui ne se pratiquent qu'entre des âmes de basse origine" (Timothée de Chillac-*Oeuvres,* 1599). Princes and princesses appear only by exception. The ordinary characters are exactly those "honnestes gens" whom Corneille depicted in his first plays. In voicing their theories, in their prefaces, the novelists opposed the enormous influence of antiquity as well as the "foreign country" craze which later sent so many novel-heroes to Turkey or to unknown lands.

The anonymous author of the *Amours du brave Lydamas et de la belle Myrtille,* (Toulouse, 1594) says that he depicts "des Amours françois et non estrangers." And du Souhait in the novel, *Poliphile et Méllonimphe* (1598), argues: "Qu'est il besoign de mendier chez les anciens le tesmoignage des effects de l'amour, puisque nostre siècle les faict naistre! Ne croirons nous plustost à nos yeux qu' à nos oreilles? Qui sont ceux tant amis de l'antiquité et ennemis de leur âge, qui donnent vie à des histoires rapportées de nos pères, pour ensevelir celles qui naissent avec nous?" The author of *La Constance d'Alisée et de Diane* opposes the custom of using foreign settings in novels: "Belles âmes que la France a nourries et eslevées dans son sein, pourquoy allez-vous mendiant parmy les estrangers les ruynes d'amour, pour en faire parade, laissant en depost à l'oubliance les plus remarquables tragédies de ce tyran, advenues entre les François?" While insisting on the necessity of finding inspiration in daily life, some novelists ask for more truth in the painting of love, for more "vraysemblance." The anonymous author of the *Amours de Mélite et de Statiphile* (1609), claims his adherence to these principles in these terms: "Hélas, qu'il est besoign recourir aux masures de l'antiquité, remembrer les siècles passées, escheler les cieux comme nouveaux Promethées, pour y desrober quelque science d'amour.....pour ne tenir compte des estranges accidens qu'ordinairement nous produit l'excès d'une passion amoureuse, en nos contrées, en l'enclos de nos villes, et de nos maisons.....On ne verra pas dans mon livre, des événemens tragiques, des fictions de Psyché avec son Cupidon, ny les ruses d'une Médée; mais la vérité de ma passion, le progrez de mes amoureuses recherches et facheux accidens d'icelles, la fidélité d'un serviteur payé d'inconstance." The

sieur de la Regnerye in the *Amours de Lintason et de Palinoé* (1601) follows the same theory. He declares that his story was "très veritable", and that he told it "naivement."

François de Rosset in the *Preface* of his *Histoires tragiques de nostre Temps* (1st ed. 1616) exclaimed as so many other novel-writers of the time: "Ce ne sont pas des contes de l'antiquité fabuleuse, que je te donne (O France mère de tant de beaux Esprits, qui font rougir de honte et la Grèce et l'Italie;) Ce sont des Histoires autant véritables que tristes et funestes. Les noms de la plupart des personnages sont seulement desguisez en ce Théâtre, à fin de n'affliger pas tant les familles de ceux qui en ont donné le suject....."

The last sentence refers to an important element of contemporaneity in the novel of the beginning of the seventeenth century, the tendency to narrate actual events—sometimes embellished with very improbable incidents—to flatter influential noblemen by making them the disguised heroes of a story. The numerous "Romans à clef" thus created, fitted in with a similar tendency in the pastoral play, which, staged mostly in the castles of the nobles, in many cases pretended to put on the scene, under a disguise, the constant or fickle loves of a noble protector of letters.

One of the stories of Rosset's *Histoires Tragiques* depicts some incidents from the life of François de Lorraine, de Guise, "Lieutenant Général pour le Roy en Provence." In the *Dédicace* to him, it is said: ".....vous estes l'autheur de la plus belle partie de cest ouvrage. Vostre valeur s'y est dépeinte avec de si vives couleurs, que l'esclat en fait rougir de honte les plus valeureux de ce siècle.....Il n'est pas besoing de réciter en ceste Epitre ce que tout le monde sait admirer, puisque je l'ay fidellement descrit en l'une de ces Histoires....."

In a similar way, a great number of authors of the beginning of the seventeenth century described, under assumed names, the adventures of living personages. And this preoccupation was bound to give to their work a certain measure of reality and fidelity in the depicting of contemporary life. To this category of "Romans à clef" belong, for example: *Les amours de la belle du Luc* of J. Prévost (1597). *La Galatée et les adventures du Prince Astiages* of A. Remy (1625):—*Histoire de la vie et de la mort d'Arthémise* by Jean de Lannel (1621);—*La Caritée* of Gomberville (1621);—*Le Cléandre d'Amour et de Mars* of

Pébrac de Montpesat (1620);—*L'Arcadie Françoise* of Ollénix de Mont Sacré (1625);—*Le Roman des chevaliers de la Gloire* of de Rosset (1612); *Romant royal ou histoire de nostre temps* of Piloust (1621);—*Théatre d'Histoires* of Phil. de Belleville (1610);—*Cléodante et Hermelinde ou Histoire de la Cour* of A. Humbert (1629); *Endymion* of Gombauld (1624);—*Histoire des Amans volages de ce temps* of de Rosset (1616)—*Roman de la Cour de Bruxelles* of Puget de la Serre (1628) *Polyxène* of Molière d' Essertines (1625) and other novels or collections of stories.

Some authors claim that their stories are entirely true and even add in some cases, that they were actually copied from real life. Rézé calls his *Désesperé contentement d'Amour* (1599) an "Histoire véritable et advenue." So does du Souhait for his *Amours de Poliphile et Mellonimphe* (1599) and his *Les Propriétez d'Amour* (1601). To the same class belong: *Les amours d'Amisidore et de Chrysolite,* "histoire véritable où est descrite l'inconstance des amoureux de ce temps" of du Bail (1623);—*L'Olympe d'amour, histoire non fainte* of Henri du Lisdam (1609);—*Les fidelles et constantes amours de Lisdamus et de Cléonymphe* of Henri du Lisdam (1615), where the hero is clearly the writer himself;—the *Histoire tragi-comique de nostre temps sous les noms de Lysandre et de Caliste* of d'Audiguier (1615);—*Les agréables diversitez d'Amour* of N. Moulinet (1613);—*Le tableau des deserts enchantés* of N. Piloust (1614) containing stories "aussi pitoyables que véritables"—Marechal's *La Chrysolite ou le secret des romans* (1627)—*Les Amours de Philandre, gentilhomme Bourguignon,* of Des Escuteaux (1621)—*La Mort de l'Amour où se list la véritable et nouvelle histoire des amours de Calianthe et Florifile* of Pr. Gauthiér (1616),—*L'Histoire des amours tragiques de ce temps* of Isaac de Laffemas (1607)—and a number of other novels and collections of stories whose pretension to depict contemporary life is more or less justified.

Men of greater renown than most of these now-forgotten novel-writers, acclaimed the theory. The pious and prolific bishop Camus reproached the authors of his time for disguising in ancient frocks, the incidents of daily life and love. He ventured his criticism as follows in the *Préface* of his *Cléoreste,* "histoire françoise-espagnolle, représentant le tableau d'une parfaite amitié" (1626) .....vous à qui un événement arrivé en des lieux voysins, ou que vous fréquentez d'ordinaire, fait plaisir,

aurez sans doute plus de plaisir d'ouir ce qui s'est passé auprès de vostre demeure, que si ce succès estoit avenu en des endroits plus esloignez.....Et cependant il y a des esprits je ne sçay comment faicts, qui ne peuvent se contenter que par le récit des histoires anciennes, encore que ce soient des choux cuits et recuits à tant de fois qu'ils excitent un desgoust plustost qu'ils ne donnent de l'appetit; ou si elles sont modernes, qui les veulent des pais si esloignez de leur connoissance qu'on n'en puisse avoir de certitude asseurée.....De moy, j' ay tousjours estimé que nous ne devions point aller chercher si loing de nous ce qui estoit proche, soit pour les lieux, soit pour le temps, et qu'il ne falloit point emprunter des livres escrits ce que l'on peut pescher dans les événements qui tombent devant nos yeux, et dont nous sommes temoins irréprochables. Cependant plusieurs escrivains ignorans ce secret.....pour multiplier leurs fautes en pensant bien faire.....desguisent à l'antique ce qui est moderne, habillent à l'estranger ce qui est domestique, mauvais tailleurs et cuisiniers. Mais aussi de réléguer en Asie, en Affrique, ou en Amérique ce qui est avenu parmi nous, et feindre des religions profanes, ou des lieux que les Cosmographes ont de la peine à trouver dans leurs cartes, c'est une extrémité qui ne peut estre appreuvée." (61). The heroes of the devout novelist, as a matter of fact, frequently belong to the middle-class of the time. G. Bayer (*Pierre Camus und seine Romane* 1906) has shown that some of the stories he narrates are based on actual incidents of Camus' own life or of that of his acquaintances. Other, however, have too strong a flavour of the "invraysemblable" to be a real picture of daily incidents truthfully observed. And frequently his confessed intention to prove in his tales the superiority of the religious vocation distorts his point of view. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, his numerous works were relatively more "vraysemblable" than a great part of the contemporary literature and they increased, in this way, the growing tendency toward more truth in literary art. He was as much an outspoken enemy of the exaggerations of the "roman d'aventure" and of the pastoral novel as Sorel or Mareschal. He even claimed that he wrote his works with the intention of combating their nefarious influence. "Or, pour terrasser tant de livres fabuleux, je n'entreprends pas mon combat de droit front, comme si je refutais des hérésies. Car il n'est point besoin de se mettre en peine de prouver l'obscurité des ténèbres, ni de montrer la fausseté de ces romans, bergeries,

aventures, chevaleries et autres fatras, qui se confessent fabuleux en leurs préfaces, et dont la lecture pleine de caprice, de vers, de feintes, d'impossibilités, d'absurdités, d'enchantements, d'extravagances, et pareilles bagatelles, fait assez connaître l'impertinence. Ce serait, comme dit l'apôtre, combattre contre l'air et courir sans but, ou tout au plus imiter cet empereur fainéant qui ne faisait la guerre qu'aux mouches. De quelle façon est-ce donc que je tache de défaire mes adversaires? C'est par diversion et comme Jacob fit à Esau, par supplantation, mettant des révélations chrétiennes, veritables et utiles à la place de celles qui sont profanes, fabuleuses, et non seulement inutiles, mais, pour la plus grande part pernicieuses." (62) Among his contemporary novels may be mentioned: *Pétronille, accident pitoyable de nos jours* (1610), *La Mémoire de Darie* (1620), *Elise, événement tragique de nostre temps* (1621), *Dorothée* (1625), *Flaminio et Calman* (1626), *Aloph ou le Parastre malheureux, histoire française* (1626), *Honorat et Aurelio* (1628), *Marianne* (1629), *Les spectacles d'horreur, ou se découvrent plusieurs tragiques effets de nostre siècle* (1630), *L'Amphithétre sanglant* (1630), etc. In 1629 Camus went to Rouen as vicar to the archbishop François de Harlay for whom, in 1633, Corneille wrote his *"Excusatio."* It is thus very likely that the poet knew Camus and his works at the very time that he was writing his *Mélite.*

Among the novels taking inspiration from contemporary life, a number are found which tell the adventures of lovers of the capital and of the court, and introduce certain parts of Paris as a setting. In view of Corneille's portrayal on the stage of the same category of lovers in the same milieu, they may be styled forerunners in prose of his endeavour in verse. The anonymous *Marianne de Filomèle* (1596) is called "histoire advenue, il n'y a longtemps en ceste ville de Paris." Camus designates his *Marianne ou l' innocente victime* as an Événement tragique, arrivé au faubourg St. Germain, and his *La pieuse Julie* (1625) as an *histoire parisienne.* A number of novels relate incidents which occurred at the court, and sketch living courtiers under assumed names. The more psychological novels furnish, for instance, *Les diverses Affections de Minerve* of d'Audiguier (1625), an interesting study of a young woman, an artful coquette, surrounded by her various suitors, like Corneille's *Veuve.* The scene is laid in Paris, as it is for *La Floride* of du Verdier (1624) which presents a similar subject. These two books lead us to that other

study of a coquette, *Chrysolite ou le secret des romans* of A. Mareschal (1627) in which "Athens" is a transparent mask for Paris. In his *Préface* he defends strongly the "vray-semblable" and the contemporaneity of material. He finds in the novels of his time, "rien de solide, rien de vraysemblable, ni qui se puisse rapporter aux moeurs et à la puissance des hommes, ou du veritable cours du temps et des siècles.....Voyant.....que jusques ici tous ceux qui se sont picquez en ce genre d'écrire nous ont vendu le fard pour le vray teint, et ont donné une face â leurs livres, qui pour estre pleine de piperies, de mensognes et d'impossibilités, a pu entretenir et abuser beaucoup d'esprits.....J'ai voulu reduire à nostre portée ce faste menteur, et cet orgeuil qui ne sert que pour faire une pompe au dessus des nues.....Ici je n'ay rien mis qu'un homme ne peust faire, je me suis tenu dans les termes d'une vie privée, afin que chacun se peust mouler sur les actions que je descry, et je ne me suis mis de l'antiquité que pour donner une couleur estrangère au bien ou au mal de nostre temps." Sorel, who exercised a very potent influence in the direction of contemporaneity of material had attempted the portrayal of contemporary life before illustrating his theories in a satirical way with his *Berger extravagant.* His *Palais d'Angélie* (1632) is composed of a number of love-stories, told by girls and young men, and each tale starts or finishes by an abduction. In his *Preface* he says: "Je me suis esloigné du tout de ces histoires monstrueuses qui n'ont aucune vraysemblance. Je ne raconte que des actions qui se peuvent faire selon le temps." One of the stories, *Olynthe,* (63) takes us to the fair of St. Germain, to the Gallerie du Palais, etc. His observations of the higher bourgeoisie are interesting in view of the appearance of these types on the stage a few years later. With *Les Nouvelles Françoises* (1623) he preserves to a certain extent the modernity of the subject, although he introduces too many "invraysemblable" adventures, atrocious fights with Turkish pirates, hidden treasures, shipwrecks, etc. Notwithstanding this concession to the taste of the time, some stories of the book take place in Paris, in the Tuilleries or the Bois de Vincennes, as for example, *Les Trois Amans.* Sorel, like the others, insists upon the necessity of turning to contemporary subjects, and he uses the identical terms of Camus: "Beautez.....vous aurez sans doute plus de plaisir d'entendre une histoire qui s'est passée en des lieux que vous fréquentez ordinairement, qu'une autre, dont tous les succès seroient

réservez en d'autres endroits. Cependant plusieurs qui ignorant ce secret, ne vous donnent que des histoires des plus esloignez, lesquelles ne vous scauroient si bien toucher l'âme, et commettent une faute en pensant bien faire, desguisent le plus souvent ce qui est avenu en nostre contrée en l'habillant à l'estrangère. Bien qu' ils ayent acquis du renom, je ne les veux pas suivre en cela, croyant que la gloire ne leur a pas esté donnée judicieusement." (Page 555). In his *Francion* (1622) Sorel repeats, in satyrical form, the demand for contemporary material and greater "vray-semblance." He speaks of a shepherd-novel in the following terms: "Les bergers y sont philosophes et font l'amour de la même sorte que le plus gallant homme du monde. A quel propos tout ceci? Que l'auteur ne donne-t-il à ces personnages la qualité de chevaliers bien nourris? Leur fit il, en cet état, faire des miracles de prudence et de bien dire, l'on ne s'en étonneroit point comme d'un prodige. L'histoire véritable ou feinte, doit representer les choses au plus près du naturel; autrement c'est une fable qui ne sert qu'à entretenir les enfants au coin du feu, non pas les esprits murs, dont la vivacité pénètre partout." And later on in his *Bibliothèque Françoise* (64) he repeats while passing judgment on his own early novels: "Ce ne sont point de ces grands sujets qu'on appelle Heroiques, où il ne paroist que des Roys et des Conquerans sur la scène: Ce sont des avantures de quelques personnes de mediocre condition, mais on y trouvera possible de la vray-semblance, et le stile est accommodé au sujet."

The theory of the description of contemporary life in fiction had thus been voiced and exemplified abundantly in a number of novels which were in favour at the time of Corneille's youth. This constant demand for contemporaneity and truth in literary art—also reiterated by Theophile de Viau—hardly could remain without influence upon the stage of the time. Yet, as far as is known, it was only about 1630 that, rather suddenly, French contemporary life appeared on the stage. It is quite probable that before that date, Hardy treated in some of his lost plays subject matter taken from the life of the times. If rediscovered, they would illuminate fully the meaning of Corneille's words, that he began to write following the example of "feu Hardy." Since Hardy constantly took subjects from novels and novelettes, it would be difficult to conceive that in his restless hunt for subjects to be staged in his hundreds of plays, he would have left untouched the rich and inviting source of inspiration to be found

in the novel of contemporary tendencies, of which he made use for his *Dorise*. Among his known plays some are derived from novels and stories, from Cervantes, Boccaccio Greene, etc. Particularly significant is it that Hardy's *Dorise*—as pointed out above—is very similar in characterization, construction, and atmosphere to Corneille's *Mélite*. Corneille's early plays have a common trait: they all stage a pastoral love-imbroglio more or less successfully interwoven with a realistic setting. Exactly in this, lies their striking resemblance to a number of contemporary novels which show the same method of composition.

The problem which Corneille, at his début, had to solve was, to combine a certain measure of contemporary truth with an artificial pastoral love-imbroglio. He solved it as before him novel-writers had done by dropping the most unreal scenes of the pastoral plots, the echoes, the satyrs, the magicians, and by transposing the remaining love-story into a well-known setting. That his sense of the "real" was, at first, not always sure, is shown by his introduction into the plot of his *Mélite,* such hackneyed and mythological scenes as those of the madness of Eraste. Yet we cannot doubt that he was helped in his attempt to depict contemporary life by examples of similar tendencies in the "quelques modernes" which he confessed to have read at the time of his début (65).

For even the pastoral literature of the times was not altogether artificial and unrealistically imaginative. Under the impulse toward the vraysemblable and toward more fidelity to nature which grows stronger in the first decades of the seventeenth century, all that was actual and living in the pastoral plays of the time was brought to the foreground and disengaged from the unessential and traditional episodes of Spanish and Italian origin. After all, the pastoral plays of the time were more real than we now suppose. They had a certain bearing upon the life of the period which time has dimmed for us and made difficult to estimate.

To us, no relation at all seems to exist between those traditional satyrs, echoes, sighing shepherds, and capricious shepherdesses, and the real men and women of the epoch. Yet, many writers of pastorals had symbolical intentions and brought on the stage real characters disguised as shepherds. They wrote for court-circles and affected to represent "les aventures de quelques grands princes" (66) under the transparent veil of the

shepherd's tale then in vogue. In the introduction of the *Astrée,* Honoré d'Urfé says that nobody ought to wonder at the refined language of his shepherds as they are no real rustics, but well-bred noblemen and women, who only took on this disguise to enable them to lead a more varied and interesting life. He defends his symbolical attitude by pointing to the theater of the time, where, he says, the shepherds were dressed in lace and silk, and carried a gilded shepherd's crook. La Mesnardiére, in his *Poétique* (1640), holds that the poets should lend only fine feelings and sublime discourse to the shepherds. He takes the point of view that a pastoral play is a description of the court, where it is impossible to find "des dames laides et stupides."

For the courtier of 1600-1630, the dreamland of Arcadia, the realm of love, was not blossoming "somewhere out of the world." It was the country dreamed of by every perfect lover, a country of eternal flowers, clear streams, mysterious woods, and glorious evenings, through which a sublimated love would lead them. It had for them the reality of a poetic fancy, gilding the cold facts of daily life. They adopted this disguise, these names, and these manners, half through fashion, half through sympathy for its artificial but refined poetry. Half sincere, half make-believe in play, they identified themselves with the shepherds of the pastorals, who were all "perfect courtiers" in pseudo-rustic disguise. They named their sweethearts after these shepherdesses of their favorite stories. Circles and academies were founded where the fictitious shepherd's existence passed from the stage into actual life. "Tous étaient frappés." Court-circles became a sort of continuous masquerade, in which poets and men of learning, the rich bourgeoisie and officials, and even grave theologians and dashing generals took part. All followed the vogue. The influence of the *Astrée* on the Hôtel de Rambouillet is well known. The German princes offered to d'Urfé the presidency of their shepherds' circle, while Vauquelin des Yveteaux lived in the park of his hotel, in shepherd's dress, wearing a splendid straw-hat with an inside of red satin, and guided through the well-kept alleys an herd of imaginary sheep (67). There was, in a word, a perpetual reaction from the pastoral plays and novels upon the elegant life, and from this upon the literature. The general tendency to the rustic disguise was not exclusively an absurd and paradoxial fashion. It corresponded to a certain reality in the mind of the spectators. It had a symbolical bear-

ing on real life, and the love-stories represented seemed not so absurdly unreal as they now seem to us. The audience often felt, no doubt, that a real love-story was being told under the pastoral mask. And it was precisely this love-story which acquired a greater directness and reality as 1630 is approached. It is this tendency toward actuality and verisimilitude, toward stressing the love-story in the pastoral play more than the conventional accessories which, no doubt, was fostered by the novels of the time which depicted, more or less successfully, the actual life of the times.

Some hesitating realism appears already here and there in the pastoral plays just before 1630; some of them announce the coming change by some of their scenes or by their general spirit. A few examples may be given: the pastoral play *Aristhène* of P. Troterel (1626)—a writer whose publisher was usually Corneille's friend David du Petit-Val—almost attained an imitation of reality in the scene of a trial where no solemn druid priest pronounces a heaven-sent sentence, as in the pastoral plays, but where a real judge appears surrounded by his court. The cross-examination which ensues is in real comedy-style. The sieur de la Morelle in his *Philis ou l' amour contraire* (1627-28) paints the conflicting aspirations of a prudent father and a liberty-loving daughter in a way denoting a closer observation of reality than was the custom generally on the stage of the period. And Mareschal, who with his novel *Chrysolite* had already entered a plea for vray-semblance,—derived from the adventures of light-hearted Hylas in the *Astrée,* a pastoral which approaches the style of the comedy *L'Inconstance d'Hylas* (1629-30) (68). The chorus and the echoes disappear from the plays before or around that time (69). The satyr already humanized by Hardy, has no role at all in some *tragi-comédie-pastorales* (70).

Thus we perceive how the fundamental love-story of the pastoral play disengaged itself from the superfluous and unreal embellishments and episodes. This can be explained by the greater demand for realism fostered by the novel of contemporary tendencies, by the ironical attacks upon the invraysemblable of the pastoral literature by Sorel, Mareschal, and Camus, while it was no doubt greatly fostered by the Ballets wherein types of the real life of the time appeared (71). When the exaggerated and unreal episodes were dropped, there remained the eternal story of a true love—as treated in Corneille's early plays—crossed by an

envious rival or by avaricious parents or by the accidents of fate, ending with a general triumph for the lovers and with the traditional marriages of all the parties concerned. But it was the construction of plot which was changed and simplified, rather than the characterization. The heroes of the "contemporary" play remain true to the characteristics of the gentlemen-shepherd of the pastoral and of the sentimental novel; the lovers are still adorned with shepherd names; they still speak largely in precious "style Nervèze"; they are easily deceived with false reports or by a letter; they write poetry and complain in melodious verse; they are tender-hearted, elegant, brave and constant, or they make a display of methodic inconstancy after the manner of Hylas in the *Astrée*. Suicide and madness are the ordinary effects of a real or supposed infidelity. But the consequences of their acts of despair are rarely tragic. Those who jump in the rivers are rescued, those who retire to the desert are brought back, those who go mad recover and the rustic pipes play the dance hymns of the happy couples at the final day of happiness.

If this evolution of the pastoral play toward a greater reality, under the influence of the novels and the stories of contemporary life, is taken into account, the connection of Corneille's early plays with the literary evolution of the times will be less problematic.

If the current in French literature of 1600-1630 toward the painting of contemporary life and toward more truthfulness in characterization had affected the young Corneille alone among the playwrights around 1630, it might be called an individual case, of which no general principle could be deduced. But the same phenomenon is to be observed about this same time, in the work of other playwrights, influenced by the same general literary tendencies. They attempted to bring contemporary life on the stage without the *Mélite* having exerted any influence upon their work. Corneille's bitter and opponent in the Cid quarrel, Claveret, seems to have produced at the time of the *Mélite* his play *Angélie ou l'esprit fort* (1629-1630) (72) in which he shows really closer and more critical observation of contemporary humanity than Corneille in the *Mélite*. The plot of the play is weak, though Claveret was very proud of having observed all the rules. It consists chiefly in the amusing courtship paid by suitors of various kinds to the three bewitching daughters of Cloridan. Two of the wooers are especially interesting from the point of view of

the characterization of contemporary life: Criton, l'Esprit Fort, and his satelite, Nicandre, l'Esprit Doux. The sharp-witted Angélie, one of the daughters of Cloridan depicts l'Esprit Fort:

Ce raffiné Cliton est un homme à la mode,
Dont le seul entretien vaut bien qu'on s'incommode!
Affecter en parlant un ton impérieux;
Blamer le feu d'amour mais en feindre en tous lieux;
En effet n'aimer rien, vouloir qu'une maîtresse,
Admire leurs discours et leur fasse caresse;
Publier des faveurs que jamais ils n'ont eucs.....
Parle-t-on de l'état, faire les politiques,
Tantôt paraitre froids, réveurs, mélancholiques.
Et puis se réveillant de ce profond sommeil,
Soutenir qu'ils ont vu des taches au soleil.
Pester contre le sort, le destin, la fortune,
Et ne suivre jamais la créance commune.....
Dire un mot des bons vers, puis y faire une glose,
Jurer que Saint Martin fait mieux que Bellerose;
Lorsqu'on les contredit, faire les mutinés:
Un collet en désordre, un manteau sur le nez.....

This style resembles more Corneille's manner in the *Veuve,* the *Galerie du Palais,* and *La Place Royale* than the *Mélite.* The satire is less pronounced in the *Mélite* than in the latter plays with the exception of the character of a fop, Philandre, who talks "en style Nervèze." Claveret manifestly had read the satirical writers of the time, Regnier, Courval-Sonnet, Jean Auvray and others, and he betrayed their influence in the sketch of his Esprit Fort. And for the plays following the *Clitandre,* Corneille also seems to have imitated the tone of the satyrists. Even as Corneille's characters, for instance, in the *Galerie du Palais,* the Esprit Fort gives his opinions about the literature of the day:

"Ah! J'oublie à vous dire une plaisante chose:
Criton dit que l'Astrée est un sot livre en prose,
Que Malherbe en son temps n'entendait rien aux vers.
Comme il porte toujours son manteau de travers.
Figurez vous, Monsieur qu'il a l'esprit de même.....

Claveret's chief defect in his play is that it remains too much a literary satire. Corneille's *Mélite,* less happy and realistic in characterization, surpasses it by its lively action, by its clever arrangement and succession of scenes, qualities which reveal the born playwright.

Another common feature of both plays is their satire of preciosity and exaggerated compliments à la mode....One of the girls makes fun of the fine-mannered lover who, in his verses, had called her a "soleil incendiaire" much after the fashion of Corneille's heroines in the *Mélite* and the *Veuve.* She says: "Je crains en m'arretant de vous réduire en cendre....." and about his verses: "Je vais les rendre au feu, puisqu'ils sont tout de flamme...." And when Criton indulges in "parler Phébus", Angelie does not show any more enthusiasm than Corneille's Mélite or his Veuve for his far fetched compliments and conventional flattery:

> Qui se pourrait résoudre à ne pas vous aimer,
> Puisque aux beautés d'esprit celle du corps sont jointes?
> Vos cheveux seulement savent faire des pointes,
> Vos boucles des prisons, les plus petits des traits,
> Amour sur votre front met un arc tout exprès.
> *Angélie:* Monsieur, je suis d' humeur à rever aujourd'hui.

If Claveret did not disguise the truth in an attempt to prove that his play was earlier than Corneille's *Mélite,* when he stated, in 1637, that he wrote his play nearly seven years previously to this date, it becomes worthy of note for the history of the French stage in the early decades of the seventeenth century. Its similarity with Corneille's early works cannot be explained, in that case, by influence of the one upon the other. It points clearly to a common source of inspiration in its preference for contemporaneity and its general tone. And this common source we perceive in the novels of contemporary life, with additional color from the Ballets and from the satirical literature.

Another play represented about 1630, P. du Ryer's *Lisandre et Caliste,* a tragi-comedy, of which the scene is laid in modern France, was directly inspired by a novel treating of contemporary events, by the *Histoire tragi-comique de nostre temps* by d'Audiguier (1615). It affords another example of the influence of the novel in the direction of contemporaneity of material. The play is too overloaded with romantic incident, murder, duels, disappearances and heroic fights, to suggest a direct transcript from actual life. In the second act, however, a scene is found between a butcher and his wife, which was realistically staged in the Paris of the time as the *Mémoire de Mahelot* shows: "Il faut au milieu

du théatre le petit chastelet de la Rue de Sainct Jacques et faire paroistre une rue où sont les bouchers, etc.'' (73).

In 1633, Rayssiguier publishes his *La Bourgeoise ou la Promenade de Saint-Cloud,* which may have been played in 1631, and preceded Corneille's *Gallerie du Palais* (played probably in 1632). At least, it may be considered as having appeared at the same time. It is built upon a complicated intrigue, engineered by the ''bourgeoise'' who desires to marry either one of the two suitors of her two friends. The stage scenery is specifically Parisian. A tendency to introduce contemporary stage-setting and, in a number of cases, Parisian stage-setting as a surrounding for contemporary characters, developed in the thirties of the 17th century. A lost play by La Pinelière was called *La Foire de Sainct Germain;* P. du Ryer gave his *Vendanges de Suresnes;* Mareschal his *Railleur,* Claveret's *Eaux de Forges* was not played following the *Réponse à l'Amy du Cid* ''par la discrète crainte qu'ils (les comédiens) eurent de facher quelques personnes de condition qui pouvaient reconnoitre leurs aventures dans la représentation de cette pièce.'' (74). Another play of Claveret, a *Place Royale,* was represented in June or July 1633 (75). Balt. Baro sketched the characters of a lawyer and painter in his lost work *La Force du Destin.* The anonymous play *Le matois Mary ou la Courtizane attrapée* (Com. prose. 1634) contains details about the Parisian life of the time. Discret's *Alizone* depicts the lower bourgeoisie-class; Gillet de la Tessonerie derived a very indecent comedy from the satirical novel *Francion,* of Sorel, while Desmarets Saint Sorlin in his *Les Visionnaires* (1637) makes sport of the special forms of literary affectation of some fops and precieuses. Rayssiguier used the Thuileries as stage-setting as well as the Cinq Autheurs who desired to please Richelieu. Corneille's *Mélite* was one of the first examples of this tendency toward contemporaneity. Since we may reasonably accept that he was acquainted with the literature of his times, the numerous novels of contemporary life could not have escaped his attention. From their example and from the theories expounded in their prefaces he derived his tendency toward actuality in his first plays, more than from a direct copy of the existing society of his times. The influence which they exerted upon the young Corneille as well as upon other playwrights of the time consisted in inspiring them with a desire of bringing into their pastoral plots elements of actuality and verisimilitude. And from 1630 to 1636 Corneille,

with his rather positive sense of life—even positive and affirmative in his heroic tragedies—followed more consistently this impulse than his fellow playwrights.

* * *

In view of Thomas Corneille's and Fontenelle's testimonials, it can be accepted that the first impulse to write the *Mélite* was due to a love-adventure of Pierre Corneille. Yet, while composing his first play, he took color from the contemporary literature. Various episodes or characters of it denote conscious imitation of stock themes, such as the madness of Éraste and the trick of the false letters, or of traditional characters, such as the nurse. As far as the characterization of the principal heroes and heroines is concerned, his imitation seems less direct and more in the nature of an influence: his heroes resemble closely, it is true, those of the pastoral and of the sentimental novel, but they seem to be specimens of the same type rather than slavish copies derived from a direct source. A more conscious effort of art can be detected in Corneille's endeavor to depict on the stage contemporary life, after the fashion of many novels of the time.

Because of its predominant literary inspiration the *Mélite* cannot be interpreted entirely as an auto-biographical document: it throws more light on the fact that Corneille was well acquainted with the French literature of his day than on his life. Its characters cannot be identified with living personages, with Cathérine Hue, Corneille himself and his sister, Marie. When the purely literary elements are taken out of the play, the auto-biographical side is seen to shrink to slender proportions: it is probable that the part relating to the sonnet "Après les yeux de Mélite, il n' y a rien d' adorable", is a trace of Corneille's actual experience, for Corneille printed this sonnet before the play, and in the *Mélite* it constitutes a kind of "hors d' oeuvre", without any direct bearing on the action.

On the other hand the literary influences upon the *Mélite* here discussed prove that Corneille was well aware of the literary life of his period, even at his début, and that he cannot be conceived as a young man, who, without literary preparation, suddenly began to write an original comedy merely to celebrate his sweetheart's charms. His first work appears rather as a natural outgrowth of the influences by which he was surrounded in Rouen, a center of literary activity at the time. From this point of

view, too, his early comedies are seen to be connected with the literature of his epoch, which largely inspired him in various convental episodes and in his early conception of character. No "abyss"—as has been said—separates Corneille from the preceding literature. The first blossoming of his art was a natural phenomenon of development, due to his milieu and his natural curiosity for literature; no sudden and spontaneous miracle of love.

NOTES

(1) Bouquet.—*Points obscurs et nouveaux de la vie de Pierre Corneille.* Ch. VI.—Corneille et la Cour de Louis XIII aux Eaux de Forges.

(2) La Bruyère.—*Des ouvrages de l' esprit.*—Ed. Servais. 1912, I, p. 139.

(3) Boileau.—*Réfléxions critiques sur Longin.* Ed. Gidel, III, 363-64.

(4) Voltaire—*Avis sur les comédies de Corneille.*—Oeuvres. 1785, vol. 51, p. 447.

(5) La Harpe—*Lycée ou Cours de Litt.* 1820, V, 195.

(6) Nisard.—*Hist. de la Litt. fr.* II, 96.

(7) Abbé d' Olivet cited by Le Brun: *Corneille devant trois siècles.*

(8) Nisard.—*Hist. de la litt. fr.,* II, 87.

(9) Roger Le Brun.—*Corneille devant trois siècles.*—Introduction, p. 11.

(10) F. Brunetière.—*Hist. de la litt. fr. classique.* II, 173.

(11) 1708; *Dictionnaire géographique.* Word: Rouen.

(12) Marty-Laveaux, X.

(13) *Nouvelles de la République des lettres*—1685. p. 89. Éloge de M. Corneille. Marty-Laveaux (I, 21 and 125) attributes this article to an anonymous author. U. Meyer in the *Zeitschrift f. Franz. Spr. und Lit.* 1885 (p. 119, note 2) attributes it to Fontenelle. Cf. Also the other studies on Corneille by U. Meyer.

(14) Introduction to the edition of Corneille's works by the abbé Granet, 1738.

(15) Manuscript in the library of Caen. It has been dated about 1785-90.

(16) Emm. Gaillard—*Nouveaux détails sur Pierre Corneille,* 1834.

(17) See his edition of Corneille, I, 128.

(18) F. Bouquet. op. cit. 62.

(19) Marie Corneille was baptized on November 4, 1609. Cf. Bouquet op. cit, 62.

(20) The most reliable account is, of course, the one given by Thomas Corneille. Fontenelle was born at Rouen in 1657. Pierre Corneille left that city for Paris in 1662, when his nephew was five years old. Fontenelle himself confessed that his knowledge of the historical facts of Pierre Corneille's life was limited and uncertain. Speaking about the edition of Corneille's works by the abbé Granet, in 1738, he said: On a receuilli, avec soin et avec goût, ces différentes pièces, dont on a fait un volume à la suite de son Théatre, réimprimé en 1738, et je ne puis mieux faire que de renvoyer sur toute cette matière.... qu' à une préface judicieuse et bien écrite, où l' on trouvera de plus des traits historiques que je ne savais pas. L' auteur y doute d' un fait que j' avais avancé; j' avoue que son doute seul m' ébranle; c' est un fait que j' ai trouvé établi dans ma mémoire comme certain, quoique depouillé de toutes ses preuves, que j' ai eu tout le loisir d'oublier parfaitement.'' (*Vie de Corneille* par Fontenelle, ed. Bélin, p. 348 and *Hist. de l' Académie Française,* by Pellison et d' Olivet, ed. Livet p. 208.)

(21) See my articles in *Modern Philology:* A commonplace in Corneille's Mélite. XVII, 141; and Corneille's early Friends and Surroundings, XVIII, 361.

(22) For a list of translations, see Lee Wolff.—*The Greek Romances in Elizabethan Prose Fiction.* 1506.—Italian translation of books V-VIII by L. Dolce.—1560.—Complete Italian translation by Angelo Coccio.—1597.—English translation by Wm. Burton.

(23) *Les Devis amoureux, traduits nagueres de grec en latin et depuis de latin en françois par l' Amoureux de Vertu.*— Paris. G. Corrozet. 1545.

(24) Lyon, C. Marchant. 1556.—Lyon B. Rigaud. 1573.

(25) See H. Carrington Lancaster.—Two lost plays by Alex. Hardy.—*Modern Language Notes.* May, 1912.

(25a) See H. Carrington Lancaster—*Pierre du Ryer, dramatist.*

(26) G. Reynier.—*Le roman sentimental avant l' Astrée,* p. 380

(26a) Corneille's *Illusion Comique,* Mahelot's *Mémoire,* and Rampalle's *Bélinde. Studies in Philology,* XVIII, 1.

(27) Probably 1628.

(28) A. Feuillerat.—*John Lyly: Contribution à l' histoire de la Renaissance en Angleterre.* Cambridge, 1910, pp. 74-75; 274-75.

(29) Cf. S. Lee Wolff.—A source of Euphues. *Modern Philology,* April, 1910. Also his book *"The Greek Romances in Elizabethan Prose."* Fiction.—1912, p. 248.

(30) Wilhelm Grimm (*Kleinere Schriften,* III), Erwin Rohde (*Der Griechische Roman and seine Vorlaufer,* p. 274), and Gaston Paris (*La litt. fr. au Moyen Age,* p. 51) agree that the probable source of the Rival-friends story is a lost Greek romance. The old French poem *Athis et Prophilias* by Alexandre de Barnai seems to be based on it. Rohde and others think it possible that Boccaccio made use of the lost Middle-Greek romance for his *Tito é Gisippo.* A curious hypothesis is set up by Mr. S. L. Wolff about Goldsmith's possible knowledge of the Greek source and about the use he made of it for his rival story: *Septimius and Alcander.*—See L. Wolff, op. cit. p. 263. The essential features of the story are found in *Petrus Alphonsus Disciplina Clericalis* (circa 1106); in the *Gesta Romanorum;* in Thomas de Cantimpré's *De Proprietatibus Apum* (after 1251); in Nicolas Pergamenus'' *Dialogus Creaturarum* (13th or 14th century); etc.

(31) 1535, f. 211-227.

(32) By Jean Barbe d'Orge. 1537.

(33) *Phillippi Beroaldi Bononiensis Poete Carmen de Duobus Amantibus* 1530.—*L' hystoyre de Titus et Gesippus et autres petiz oeuvres de Beroalde Latin, interpretés en Rime Françoise* par Francois Habert. 1431.—Cf. S. Lee Wolff op. cit. and *Violier des Histoires Romaines* (translation of the *Gesta Romanorum*). Republished in the *Bibl. Elzévirienne,* 1858.—p. 392-93.

(34) *Astrée.*—Vol. II, story I and II; vol. V, story 5 and p. 373.

(35) Adapted from the *Astrée:* Histoire de Célion et de Bellinde (I, story 10). Played about 1631, printed 1634.

(36) Hardy.—*Oeuvres.*—Ed. Stengel.

(37) Hardy's *Dorise* was adapted from a story of de Ros-

set's *Histoires des Amans volages de ce temps ou sous des noms empruntez sont contenus les Amours de plusieurs Princes, Seigneurs, Gentils-hommes, et autres personnes de marque, qui ont trompé leurs Maistresses, ou qui ont esté trompez d' elles.* 1614 (?) 1616, 1619, etc.

(39) 1632. Marsan, *La Pastorale dramatique.*

(40) Bouquet.—op. cit. 57-58.

(41) These passages were erased in later editions. See the footnotes in Marty-Laveaux's edition.

(42) I, 8; II, 3, 4; III, 7, 9; V, 1, 12.

(43) 1635; Cf. Marsan. *La Pastorale dramatique.*

(44) Marty-Lav. I, 156.

(45) Such a scene was quite general and conventional in the pastoral plays of the time. It is also found in novels. The second scene of the first act of T. Tasso's *Aminta* was an influential example. To Tasso's influence seems due that in *Théocris,* a pastorale of P. Troterel, sieur d' Aves, (1610, Rouen, Du Petit-Val.) the joyful Néridon gives to his friend Théocris the same worldly-wise counsels.

(46) By de Nervèze.—1601 (?) 1602. Included in the collective edition of de Nervèze's stories: *Amours diverses.* 1606. (The 6th story).

(47) Marty-Lav. I, 139.

(48) Gasté.—*La querelle du Cid.* p. 309.

(49) See my article in *Modern Philology* (July, 1910): *A Commonplace in Corneille's Mélite: The madness of Eraste.* The lovers of the novels, of the pastoral plays and of the tragi-comedies of the 1600-1640 period were frequently represented as mad, as attempting suicide, or rushing, in imagination, through the infernal regions. Mad lovers are especially prevalent in the plays which appeared about the time that the *Mélite* was being composed or soon after its first representation, so that they may have been acted before Corneille's play. The article refers, for similar scenes, to Hardy's *Alcméon ou la vengeance féminine,* Racan's *Bergeries,* Pichou's *Folies de Cardénio,* Mairet's *Sylvie,* Rotrou's *Hypocondriaque,* Mareschal's *Généreuse Allemande,* Jacques Le Clerc's *Guerrier Repenty,* de la Croix's *Climène,* de la Morelle's *Philine ou l' amour contraire,* the anonymous play *La Folie de Silène* (1624), du Vicuget's *Adventures de Policandre et de Basilie.*

(50) *Les Oeuvres de Philippes Des Portes.* Lyon, Rigaud, 1593. f. 221.

Other forms of poetry also felt the influence of this convention. In the *Franciade* of Ronsard the madness of Clymène is depicted. Learning that Francus has rejected her love she loses her reason and runs, "hurlante par les champs" pursuing a wild boar whom she takes for her lover. Another instance is to be found in *Les Changementz de la Bergère Iris* by J. de Lingendes (Paris, 1605) where Philène having lost his sweetheart thus narrates his experiences:

Lors m'égarant en mes propos,
Sans nourriture et sans repos,
Et repaissant ma fantaisie
De ce qui l'alloit offensant,
Mon mal tousjours se renforçant
Enfin je tombe en frénaisie.

.....

Et voyant, mais sans jugement,
Et privé de tout sentiment,
Un vieil Nautonnier pasle et sombre,
Je pensay que ce fust Charron,
Qui m'enlevait sur l'Acheron,
Croyant n'estre plus que mon ombre.

These conventional madness scenes became popular in the novels of which *Astrée* may be taken as a representative. In an episode of the second volume (*Histoire de Doris et Palémon*) Adraste becomes insane through love and the author, d'Urfé, used the material for his pastoral play *Sylvanire.* In the *Histoire de Rosanire, Céliodante et Rosiléon* of the fourth volume, Céliodante has the same misfortune. And this episode furnished the material for a lost play of Pichou, *Rosiléon,* and for the *Cléomédon* of Du Ryer which was first played under the name of *Rossyléon* (cf. Carrington Lancaster, P. Du Ryer). In the seventh volume Azahyde makes an unsuccessful attempt to murder Sylvandre. The father of Azahyde dies broken hearted whereupon the latter shuns society and brooding over his sins becomes insane. His description of his experience, which is typical, shows how d'Urfé appropriated the processes to be found in the tragedies, tragi-comedies and pastoral plays of the time: Ainsi ne trouvant plus de paix dans la société, je recourus

à la solitude, et pour cela je me retiray en une maison que j'ay aux champs, mais mon péché qui me suivoit partout ne me donna pas plus de relasche là qu'ailleurs; au contraire, comme si le ciel eust voulu me punir par moy-mesme, il permit que durant plus d'un mois je n'eus jamais de pensées que celles de ma faute, et de la punition que j'en pouvois encourir. Ce qui me troubla de sorte, que je recognus sensiblement que peu à peu ma raison se perdit dans la violence de ce ressentiment. Je combattis quelque temps contre la naissance de ce mal; mais les Dieux qui voulurent appesantir leurs mains sur moy, me firent bien tost esprouver qu'ils pouvoient donner aux mortels des peines plus grandes que celles qui proviennent de la perte de la raison. et de fait, une nuict que j'estois enfermé dans ma chambre, et couché dans mon lit, j'ouys, tout à coup, ouvrir la porte, avec un bruit espouventable, et soudain que j'eus porté curieusement la vue pour apprendre ce que c'estoit, je vis Abariel (his father) couvert de sang en plusieurs endroits tenant dans l'une de ses mains un flambeau allumé, et dans l'autre un coeur percé de trois ou quatre cousteaux; Il avoit devant soy l'une des Furies et les autres deux à ses costez, toutes trois portants un Flambeau comme luy, et armée dans l'autre main de fouets retors, qui se séparoient en diverses pointes....il se retire deux ou trois pas, et faisant un certain signe aux Furies qui l'accompagnoient aussitost elles se saisirent de moy, et cependant que l'une me faisoit devorer le sein par des serpents, l'autre me brusloit de son flambeau, et la troisiesme me dechirant de coups sans s'amolir, sembloit accroistre sa rage par mes cris et par mes plaintes.....Je fus dans ce tourment plus d'une heure, après laquelle un si grand assoupissement me saisit, qu'il dura jusqu' au jour." (Vol. V, Story 10, P. 345).

Another counterpart of the situation is found in Du Périer's novel, *La Haine et l'Amour d' Arnoul et de Clairemonde.* (1600) p. 10.

Other plays with madness scenes are: *Stratonice ou le malade d'Amour*—Tragi-comedie by de Brosse (1644),—Antiochus loves his mother-in-law Stratonice. He feigns madness to obtain her hand. Mairet's tragedy *Roland* (1640) imitates the madness of *Orlando furioso.* The tragedy *Arie et Pétus, ou les Amours de Néron* by Gilbert (1659) ends with the remorse and madness of Nero.

(52) *La Comédie au XVIIe siècle,* p. 32.

(53) Here should be noted that the platonic love theories played an important part in this transformation. Authors like Castiglione in his *Cortegiano,* Leo Hebreo in his *Philosophie d' Amour,* Cornelius Agrippa in his *Declamatio de nobilitate et preecellentia feminei sexus;* Heroet in his *Parfaicte Amie,* each in their own way, had brought Platonism down from the clear regions of abstract thought to practical life. Helped by the numerous books in favor of women, connected with the eternal quarrel of the sexes in French and other literatures, they had transformed it into a sort of society-science, a code of rules governing social conduct and conversation. Pastoral novels and plays, being a mixture of things real and things ideal, of contemporary "perfect gentlemen" and of imaginary rustics, were pervaded by the same atmosphere.

(54) The date of this book is given as 1614. The Privilège of the edition Denys Moreau, Paris, is dated July 31, 1616.

(55) It is reasonable to suppose that Corneille would have read a number of the novels and plays published at Rouen, the more that one of the principal publishers of the time, Raphael du Petit-Val, was his friend. He must have been acquainted, too, with the works of the various authors who dedicated verse to him for his *La Veuve.* We also know the titles of some of the books which he received as prizes in the school of the Jesuits at Rouen. The known sources of his later works prove that he read contemporary Spanish plays and ballads, Amyot's translation of Plutarch, and various Latin historians.

Martinenche (*La Comedia espagnola en France*) has nothing to say about Spanish influence upon the *Mélite.* Huszar in his *Corneille et le théatre Espagnol* gives a list of very general features common to Corneille's early plays and the Spanish Comedia. But he cites no case of definite similarity. Corneille's first work resembles the French models cited in this study much more closely in both spirit and detail than it does the Spanish plays to which Mr. Huszar refers in a general way.

(56) Marty-Laveaux, I, 139.

(57 Cf. my study on *Corneille's early Friends and Surroundings.* Modern Philology, XVIII, p. 366.

(58) The expression "real life" is not taken here as a synonym for "realism." It means that the characters of the novel or of the play are taken from the humanity of the time, and not from legend, history or mythology.

(59) The following plays are inspired by the *Astrée:* 1. Rayssiguier, *Tragi-comédie pastorale ou les amours d'Astrée et de Céladon sont meslées à celles de Diane, de Silvandre et de Paris.* 2. Mareschal—*L'Inconstance d'Hylas.* 3. *La Prise de Marcilly* de M. (Durval?) cited by the *Mémoire de Mahelot* (fol. 41). The play is lost. 4. Auvray; *La Dorinde.* 5. Baro; *La Clorise.* 6. Rayssiguier: *Palinice, Circène et Florice.* 7. de Scudéry; *Ligdamon et Lidias.* 8. Cotignon: *Madonte.* 9. Auvray: *Madonte.* 10. Pichou: *Rosiléon* (mentioned by Isnard) lost play. 11. Du Ryer: *Rossyléon* (same play as the "*Cléomédon*" Cf. Carrington Lancaster: *P. Du Ryer,* p. 62-63). 12. Mairet: *Chriséide et Arimant.* 13. de Scudéry: *Orante.* 14. de Scudéry: *Eudoxe.* 15. Abel de Sainte Marthe: *Isidore ou la pudicité vengée.* 16. Gillet de la Tessonnerie: *La Mort de Valentinien et d'Isidore.* 17. Rayssiguier: *Alidor et Orante ou la Célidée ou la Calirie.* 18. d'Urfé: *La Sylvanire.* 19. Mairet: *La Sylvanire.* 20. de Scudéry: *Le Vassal généreux.* 21. de Scudéry:. *Le Trompeur puny ou l'histoire septentrionale.*

(60) *Les Bergeries de Vesper ou les amours d'Antonin, Florelle et autres Bergers et Bergères de Placemont et Beauséjour,* par le sieur Guillaume Coste, Gentilhomme provençal. A Paris—Rollin Baragnes—J. Bouillerot 1618."

(61) *Cléoreste,* II, f. 191.

(62) Preface of *Les Evénemens singuliers* 1628.

(63) PP. 305, 462, 758. Not without importance too, is the influence of works as Fancan's *Tombeau des Romans* 1626; the *Berger Extravagant* and Barclay's *Euphormion.* See Livre II, chap. 3....Tu verras comme l'autheur se moque de quelques uns qui estiment si fort ce que les anciens ont fait qu'ils ne peuvent s'imaginer que ceux d' à prèsent puissent mieux faire ou mieux dire (Translation of Nau. 1626).

(64) 1664.

(65) *Examen de Mélite*—Marty-Laveaux I, 138.

(66) P. Troterel: *L'Amour triomphant,* 1615.

(67) Tallemant: *Historiettes*—Vigneul—Marville. *Mélanges d'Histoire et de Littérature,* 1725, I, 177.

(68) This play was printed in 1635, but played in 1629 or 1630 as shown by the *Avis au Lecteur* where the author refers to the applause which his play "a receus sur un théatre de cinq ans." In the dedicace to Henry de Lorraine, he says about

Hylas: "Qu'il vienne paré de ses grâces naturelles qui l'ont fait souvent admirer sur le théâtre afin de vous aborder plus honorablement des applaudissements qu'il a reçeus de tout Paris et d'une vieille réputation continuée *de cinq à six ans.*"

(69) Cfr. Marsan—*La Pastorale dramatique,* Chapter VII.

(70) *Ibid,* Ch. VI and VII.

(71) Cf. *Ballets et Mascarades de Cour de Henri III à Louis XIV*—published by Paul Lacroix, 1870, 6 volumes, Henry Prunières; *Le Ballet de cour en France avant Bensérade et Lully,* 1914. H. Carrington Lancaster: *Relations between French Plays and Ballets from 1581 to 1650.* Publications of the Modern Language Association, XXXI, No. 3.

(72) This play was printed in 1636, according to the Frères Parfaict. They state the author said in his preface: "Il est sorti de ma plume, il y a *plus* de sept ans." M. Linthillac testifies that he does not know of any edition earlier than 1637 (Paris Targa). The text referred to higher reads there: "Il est sorti de ma plume il y a *près* de sept ans." The play must therefore be dated 1629 or 1630—Cf Linthillac: *Histoire de la Comédie au* XVII, Siècle, p. 8.

(73) Cf. The important critical republication of Mahelot's *Mémoire* by Professor Carrington Lancaster. Paris Champion, 1921; and, for the enumeration of plays in this paragraph his study: *Relations between French plays and Ballets from 1581 to 1650.* Publications of the Modern Language Association of America. XXXI, No. 3.

(74) Gasté.—*La querelle du Cid.* p. 304.

(75) Corneille was accused by Claveret of having begun his Place Royale "Dès que vous sûtes que j'y travaillois" *Lettre du sieur Claveret à Corneille.* Gasté, *op. cit.* 305.

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